WOMEN IN ṚGVEDA

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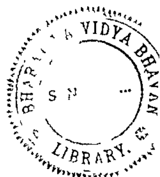
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TO MY MOTHER

ŚRIMATI MAHADEVI UPADHYAYA

PREFACE

The present work is the second edition of my *Women in Ṛgveda*. The first edition has been thoroughly revised and doubly enlarged in this venture. As my study of the *Ṛgveda* has spread now over a long period of time and as new matter has come to light, a revised edition has become imperative; and here is the result of my efforts. The work has been almost rewritten and it can be considered as an altogether new book. The method followed in the treatment of the theme of this volume is constructive, analytical and critical. It has been my endeavour to piece together, weigh and incorporate all matter that my study of this 'first book of mankind' has disclosed to me. The range of my work has been limited exclusively to the *Ṛgveda* except where I have sought help from the *Brāhmaṇas* and later literature for elucidation. The ground has been almost untrodden and the difficulties therefore have by no means been few. Most of the works that have treated of the subject of ancient Indian women have started either with the epic period or somewhere in its vicinity, but my efforts have convinced me that the *Ṛgveda* conceals a mine of information and that every effort will yield surprising results. And, I trust, there will be hardly any occasion for a savant to deplore that 'the scarcity of material in the *Ṛgveda* makes it impossible for a scholar to handle the subject'.

The frame-work of the first edition had been prepared under the able guidance of Dr. Radhakumud Mookerji, M.A., P.R.S., Ph. D., Professor and Head of the Department of Indian History, Lucknow University, under whom I worked for some time as a Research Scholar. The second edition has in many instances kept close to the earlier arrangement. The references to the works of modern authors have been gratefully acknowledged in the footnotes and in the Bibliography appended at the end of this book.

Dr. Sir S. Radhakrishnan has placed me under a deep debt of gratitude by finding time amidst his various preoccupations to add a Foreward to this volume. My most respectful thanks are due to him. I acknowledge with a genuine sense of obligation the encouragement given to me by Dr. U. C. Nag, M.A., Ph.D. (London), Principal, C. H. C., Benares Hindu University, who kindly read through the manuscript of this work. I shall indeed be failing in my duty if I omit to thank my friend Professor N. M. Kulkarni, M. A., of the Benares Hindu University, for having taken great pains in reading the proofs. Mrs. Rukmini A. Vasavada, B. A. (Hons.) has prepared the Index to this volume and I thank her cordially for her kindness.

Benares Hindu University,
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B. S. U.

FOREWORD

This book deals with the status of women in the period of the *Ṛg Veda* and treats with much learning and discrimination the difficult problems of the morals and manners, of the marriage and education of women as set forth in the *Ṛg Veda*. With an impressive impartiality the author brings out the exalted ideals as well as the lapses from them. An historical account of the institution of marriage and its forms is likely to induce in us an idea of the relativity of social habits and customs; yet it reveals the prevalence of an unchallenged tradition, an ideal definite, vivid, and well established and profusely illustrated by the stories of famous women, an ideal which our women, who are not ultramodern accept and aspire to live up to. Marriage is not an instinct but an institution based on an instinct. While we are under a biological necessity to mate and perpetuate our kind as birds and animals, we can make it the basis of a marriage of minds, the interplay of the inmost thoughts and feelings of two human beings. The adjustment of two personalities to a common way of life is full of delights and difficulties, reconciliations and disagreements. Marriage is not to be regarded as a temporary association to be dissolved at the fancy of the parties. There is a good deal to be said for the ideal of the wife as *ardhāṅgī*. The Greek myth represents that human beings were originally composed of a man and a woman, that some God divided each being in two and these separated halves are continually searching for one another. To look upon husband and wife as complementaries which make up a whole is the true implication of married life.

Calcutta,
7-3-41.

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

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WOMEN IN RGVEDA

Chapter I

THL TRANSCENDENT WOMAN

About twenty centuries before Christ a young gay and sturdy race crossed the north western frontier of India and stood on the threshold of the Saptasindhu, the land of the seven rivers The Indo Aryans as they are now called, forming the extreme eastern branch of the larger Indo European family, looked in front of them At their feet lay stretched the beautiful, rich valleys of the wide swift flowing rivers which struck them as seas (*sindhu*) Little did they know that their steel would strike against steel gripped by hands no less strong than their own and that the mastery for the land towards the east would be won only after the most stubborn resistance had been overcome at every step The primeval forests were spotted over with habitats which boasted of iron forts and buildings supported by a hundred metallic columns These local inhabitants of India called the snub nosed *Dasas* and *Dasyus* short statured and dark and living under the amenities of a distinctly superior material civilization later met their stalwart adversaries the Aryans tall fair and handsome, who were destined to drive them out from their mansions and palace

The Aryans were sentimental, romantic and grateful and the enormous sylvan stretch before them afforded them great opportunities and furnished them with groves and arbours where to retire and weave their yarns of dreamy speculations The magic land in front of them unfolded to these newcomers its endless treasures and struck them with prospects of an optimistic future and settled conditions of life which they had seldom known in their former shifting homes The devout heart beat with gratitude and the loving soul eager to call the

new glories its own burst forth into rapturous melody. From trembling lips there arose and reverberated thrilling notes in praise of Nature, which welcomed them. The joyous songs, the hymns of gratitude, in admiration of the great immortal elements of Nature, sent a thrill of joy through the veins of the Aryans and created in them a never-dying faith in future. The pleasing, vivifying and kindly phenomena of nature had also their *terrible, destructive and dispiriting counterparts*, and their beholders were consequently struck with both awe and admiration. For the first time in the history of mankind, man started creating gods after his own image. "The process of god-making" says Sir S. Radhakrishnan,[1] "in the factory of man's mind cannot be seen so clearly anywhere else as in the *Ṛgveda*. We have in it the freshness and splendour of the *morning of man's mind still undulled by past custom or fixed* routine." The tremulous notes that the Ṛgvedic bards generated were addressed to the benign gods to fulfil their needs and requirements in plenty and to the terrible ones to protect them from their wrath consequent upon their sins unwittingly committed. The *Ṛgveda* was the result of these great hymns embodying the love and fear of early civilized man.

We know *nothing of the development of the literature* of the *Ṛgveda Saṁhitā* which we find in a complete form. It is verily a Minerva born in panoply. Wilson[2] aptly remarks: "When the texts of the Ṛg and Yajur Vedas are completed, we shall be in the possession of materials *sufficient* for the safe appreciation of the results to be derived from them, and of the actual condition of the Hindus, both political and religious, at a date co-eval with that of the yet earliest known records of social organisation—long anterior to the dawn of Grecian civilisation—prior to the oldest Hebrew writings, and posterior only to the Egyptian dynasties, of which, however,

[1] *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I. p. 73.

[2] *JRAS*., Vol. xiii. 1852, p. 206, quoted in the *Indian Philosophy*, Vol I. pp. 73-74.

we yet know little except barren names; the Vedas give us abundant information respecting all that is most interesting in the contemplation of antiquity"

The Rgvedic society was founded on the home and the family as well established institutions with the proper place assigned to women under an advanced system of material laws. The Rgvedic expression—'the wife is the home'[1] (*jāyedastam*)—shows how domestic life and sentiment centred round the woman

The Rgvedic conception of womanhood at its best may well be studied in the goddesses described in this first human literary document, the *Rgveda* The strength of the woman who ruled the household of the Rsi and his Yajamāna was unconsciously reflected in the pleasing counterparts whom he created and to whom he addressed his impassioned prayers

Aditi

First in importance among the goddesses is Aditi[2] typifying motherhood She is the ideal mother like *Maat* of the Egyptians and *Themis* of the Greeks Motherhood is the essential and most characteristic trait of this divinity personifying 'a pure abstraction'[3] She is the mother of Mitra and Varuna,[4] Aryaman,[5] the Rudras,[6] the Ādityas, Indra, of kings[7] and of such other excellent sons[8] In later literature also Aditi's character as a mother is preserved

[1] *RV*, III 53, 4

[2] ibid, I 136, 3, 94, 15, 162 22, 24, 1 185 3 94 15 89, 10, 43, 2, 113, 19, 166, 12, 153, 3, II 40, 6 27, 1 and 7, III 54 10 IV 1920, 55 3, 25, 8, V 46, 6, 69, 3, 2 7, 59, 8, VI 4, 1 VII 40, 4, 10 4, 87, 7 51, 1, 9, 3, 82 10, 40, 2, VIII 9, 14, 67, 12, 25, 3, 47, 9, 90, 15, 27, 5, 67, 14, 19, 14, 18, 6 and 7, 90, 15, X 36, 3, 132 6, 72, 8, 100, 87 18, 35, 2 and 8 63, 2 and 3, 72, 4 and 5, 90, 5, 11, 1

[3] A A Macdonell *Vedic Mythology*, p 120

[4] *RV*, VIII 25, 3, X 36, 3, 132, 6

[5] ibid, VIII 47, 9

[6] ibid, 90, 15

[7] ibid, II 27, 7

[8] ibid, X 72, 8, cf *AV*, VIII 9, 21

Thus in a hymn of the *Atharva Veda*[1] and in another of the *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā*[2] she is invoked as the great mother of the devout, the mistress of the ṛta, mighty and powerful, unaging, spacious, protecting and cleverly guiding. The *Atharva Veda*[3] mentions her as even having brothers and sons. In the *Ṛgveda*[4] itself she has been referred to as the sister of the Ādityas and as the daughter of the Vasus (*duhitāvasūnām*). Everywhere else in connection with the Ādityas she is mentioned as their mother and it is here alone that she is spoken of as their sister (*svasādityānām*). The class of gods called the Ādityas have their name derived from her and so naturally her relation as mother with them is most common, but since the occasion for the Ṛgvedic poet is not one of establishing genealogical connections, a serious enquiry to this end would be absolutely irrelevant. What is important to note is that wherever she has been mentioned her function has been to tenderly look after the living beings, and this is why her tie of relationship has varied according to the occasion as a mother, housewife, sister and daughter. Thus, again, it is that she is spoken of as being both mother[5] and daughter[6] to Dakṣa. Her epithet *pastyā*[7] clearly alludes to her status as a housewife which may also imply motherhood.

Her motherhood gives her a natural sway over her children. It is to the mother that the child looks up for allaying its fear and the Ṛgvedic Aryan always runs to take refuge under the protection of this mother goddess Aditi. Many a time is she spoken of as protecting men from distress and danger (*aṁhas*), and as granting complete welfare or safety.[8] In fact the poet expects Aditi to bestow on men and gods all the

[1] VII. 6, 2.
[2] XXI. 5.
[3] VI. 4, 1.
[4] VIII. 101, 15.
[5] ibid., II. 27, 1.
[6] ibid., X. 72, 4-5.
[7] ibid., IV. 55, 3; VIII. 27, 5.
[8] ibid., X. 100; I. 94, 15.

tender care and protection which he himself has received in his actual worldly home

She is frequently invoked to release men from guilt or sin This idea is clearly connected with the etymology of her name The word *a diti* literally signifies 'unbinding,' '*freedom*,' 'boundlessness' and is derived from the word *diti*, 'binding' from *dā*, 'to bind' A form of this verb (*di ta*= bound) has been used to describe Sunahśepa 'bound' to the stake [1] Hence it is that the goddess is besought to release her worshippers who are like tied thieves (*baddha*) [2] She is invoked to make the worshippers sinless[3] and to make them free from guilt towards Varuna in return for their conforming to her ordinances [4] She is further besought to expel the evil doers from her protection and to cut them adrift from the benefit of her care [5] Other gods and goddesses like Agni,[6] Savitr,[7] Sūrya, Usas, Dyāvā and Prthivi[8] are approached to pardon sin, but the notion of freeing from it is a function of the mother goddess Aditi and her son Varuna, the chief of the Ādityas, whose noose fetters the sinful It is they that have the power of releasing men from the bonds of physical suffering and moral guilt The Ādityas, the gods, who have derived their existence from the being of this universal mother, are invoked[9] to place the offering in guiltlessness (*anagastve*) and freedom (*aditilve*) Another passage[10] speaks of Aditi's secure and unlimited gifts Her trait of boundlessness is allied

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[1] शुनश्चिच्छेपं निदित सहस्राद्यूपादमुञ्चो अशमिष्ट हि ष । *RV*, V 2 7

[2] ते न आस्नो वृकाणामादित्यासो मुमोचत । स्तेन बद्धमिवादिते ॥ ibid, VIII 67, 14.

[3] अनागास्त्व नो अदिति कृणोतु क्षत्रं नो अश्वा वनता हविष्मान् ॥ ibid I 162 22

[4] ibid VII 87, 7

[5] ibid, X 87, 18

[6] ibid, III 54 10

[7] ibid, IV 54, 3

[8] ibid, X 35, 2-3

[9] अनागास्त्वे अदितित्वे तुरास इम यज्ञं दधतु श्रोषमाणा ॥ ibid, VII 51, 1

[10] अनेहो दात्रमदितेरनर्वं हुवे स्वर्वंदवधं नमस्वत् । ibid I 185, 3

to Dyaus[1] and Agni.[2] Nature as a whole is represented by this common mother of gods and men.[3] "Aditi is the heaven," says the devout Ṛṣi, "Aditi is mid air, Aditi is the mother and the sire and son. Aditi is all gods, Aditi five classed men. Aditi is all that have been born and shall be born."[4] "Aditi", says Max Muller,[5] "....is in reality the earliest name invented to express the infinite, the endless expanse beyond the earth, beyond the clouds, beyond the sky."

She is a giver of light (*jyotiḥ*) and is therefore prayed for it.[6] The poet celebrates this imperishable, unwaning light[7] and adores Aditi by calling Uṣas, the Dawn, her radiant face.[8] The benefactions of Aditi are likened to the blessings bestowed by the Maruts.[9] She is implored to bestow on her worshippers her pure, celestial, eternal gifts[10] and is asked to confer wealth[11] on them. Her protection for men, their children and cattle is supplicated.[12]

In a few passages[13] Aditi is identified with a cow, and in the ritual, a ceremonial cow is commonly addressed as Aditi. This notion occurs in the later Vedic texts.[14] This is so because the cow to the Hindu mind even to this day typifies motherhood by providing its nourishing milk, curds, butter, etc. Both

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1 *ṚV.*, V. 59, 8 ; X. 63, 3.

2 ibid , I. 94, 15 ; IV. 1, 20 ; VII. 9, 3 ; VIII. 19, 14.

3 आदित्येभिरदिति विश्वजन्यां....ibid., VII. 10, 3.

4 अदितिर्द्यौरदितिरन्तरिक्षमदितिर्माता स पिता पुत्रः ।
विश्वेदेवा अदितिः पञ्चजना अदितिर्जातमदितिर्जनित्वम् ॥ ibid., I. 89, 10; cf. *Kath. Up.*, IV. 7.

5 *Vedic Hymns, SBE.*, 32, p. 241.

6 *ṚV.*, IV. 25, 3 ; X. 36, 3.

7 अवध्रं ज्योतिः ibid., VII. 82, 10.

8 ibid., I. 113, 19.

9 ibid., 166, 12.

10 ibid., 185, 3.

11 ibid., VII. 40, 2.

12 ibid., VIII. 18, 6 and 7 ; I. 43, 2.

13 ibid., I. 153, 3 ; VIII. 90, 15 ; X. 11, 1, etc.

14 *VS.* XIII. 43 and 49.

represent boundless plenty and hence the expression *mā gum anāgam aditim vadhista*[1]

Wallis[2] and Oldenberg[3] favour the conception of Aditi as personifying freedom Pischel,[4] Hardy[5] and Colinet[6] interpret it to mean Pṛthivī, the Earth, or the counterpart of Dyaus, sky This interpretation is mainly due to the fact that in the *Ṛgveda* Aditi is identified also with the Earth[7] Like the Earth she is extensive (*pṛthivī vitasthe*) and spacious, greater than the greatest (*mahta mahadbhih*)[8] and far pervading (*uruvyaca*)[9] mother (*māta*)[10] She is frequently styled as *devī* which word in later classical literature signifies a goddess as well as a queen, and she bears at times the epithet *anarva*[11] 'intact' 'She is widely expanded,[12] extensive, a mistress of wide stalls'[13] The *Ṛgveda* gives her no definite physical features and there she is the personification of a pure abstraction[14], but it is significant that a prolific class of terracottas, which has been identified with the mother goddess Pṛthivī or Aditi by some[15], likewise lacks absolutely in distinct physical features except in the Ṛgvedic trait of being 'spacious and extensive' (*pṛthivī*) and displays a pronouncedly flat front Aditi has been further described as bright and luminous and a prop of living beings[16] and,

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[1] *RV* VIII 101 15
[2] *Cosmology of the Rigveda* p 45 *ff*
[3] *Die Religion des Veda* pp 204 7 cf *SBE* 46 p 329
[4] *Vedische Studien* 2 p 86
[5] *Vedisch Brahmanische Periode* p 94
[6] *Transactions of the 9th Oriental Conference* I pp 396 410
[7] *RV* I 72 9
[8] ibid
[9] ibid V 46 6
[10] ibid I 72 9
[11] ibid II 40 6 VII 40 4
[12] ibid , V 46 6
[13] ibid VIII 67 12
[14] A A Macdonell *Vedic Mythology* p 120
[15] V S Agrawala *Mathura Terracottas* p 23
[16] *RV* I 136 3

as such, she belongs to all men[1] (*viśvajanyām*). She is invoked at morning, noon, and sunset.[2]

It is strange that this important goddess, whose name occurs in the *Ṛgveda* about as many as eighty times, should be so very rarely addressed alone in a separate hymn. She is constantly invoked with her sons, the Ādityas. Perhaps the explanation may be found in the notion that this mother, the first nurse of mankind, who supplied the gods with her milk,[3] could hardly exist by herself. She could not be described divorced from her function which was the tending of her children and the guiding of the affairs of the household. A mother apart from her tender motherly care of her children had no existence and hence the sage questions in childish bewilderment: "Who may give us back to the great Aditi, that I may see father and mother?"[4]

Diti

Diti[5], who in later literature becomes the progenitor of the evil forces as opposed to the gods, is not portrayed as inimical to the aspirations of men in the *Ṛgveda*. Still in the etymology of her name she carried the germs of the later trend which literally signified 'bound,' 'not free.' She would appear to be a counterpart of Aditi, the freeing mother. Naturally the freedom-loving Aryan did not favour her and the notion that her nomenclature implied, and consequently we find that this goddess has been mentioned only thrice[6] in the entire range of the *Ṛgveda* out of which twice[7] her name occurs along with Aditi. Later, in Puranic literature, we find her identified with the mother of demons.

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[1] *ṚV.*, VII. 10, 4.
[2] ibid., V. 69, 3.
[3] ibid., X. 63, 3.
[4] को नो मह्या अदितये पुनर्दात्पितरं च दृशेयं मातरं च ॥ ibid., I. 24, 1.
[5] ibid., IV. 2, 11; V. 62, 8; VII. 15, 12.
[6] ibid.
[7] ibid., IV. 2, 11; V. 62, 8.

Like Aditi Pṛthivī,[1] the Earth, also has been endowed with a motherly trait Naturally the grateful Aryan could not forget her on whose bosom he ran to and fro in childlike frolic, fought and foiled his inveterate foes and under which he was at last laid to eternal rest To this kindly mother did the dead man go [2] In the *Atharva Veda*[3] a long and beautiful hymn is addressed to her which has been so ably analysed by Dr Mookerji in his *Nationalism in Hindu Culture* [4] In the *Ṛgveda* itself she has been frequently addressed as mother [5] She has been given all the physical attributes of the Earth Abounding in great heights (*baḷitthā*) she bears the weight of the mountains (*parvatānām khidram bibharṣi*) [6] She quickens the soil (*bhūmim*)[7] and the showers of the heaven are caused by the lightning of her clouds [8] She is great and spacious (*mahī*),[9] she supports the sylvan vegetation (*vanaspati*),[10] so dear to the speculative Aryan, and is firm (*dṛḍhā*)[11] and shining (*arjuni*) [12] She was in this way the source of his life as she yielded the crops She was the Cybele of the Greeks, and, like the Vedas the Homeric hymns sang of the great goddess [13]

Pṛthivī

Besides her exclusive motherly trait she is also conceived as a wife and her association with her husband, Dyāvā (heaven),

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[1] *RV*, V 84, I 159 160 185 VI 70 VII 53 X 18 10 etc

[2] ऊर्णम्रदा युवतिर्दक्षिणावत एषा त्वा पातु निर्ऋतेरुपस्थात् ॥ ibid, X 18 10

[3] XII 1

[4] Pp 20 22

[5] *RV*, I 159, 2, 185, 10, VI 70 6 etc

[6] ibid V 84 1

[7] ibid

[8] यत्ते अभ्रस्य विद्युतो दिवो वर्षन्ति वृष्टय ibid 3

[9] ibid, VII 53, 1 also in I 159, 160 185 etc

[10] ibid, V 84 3

[11] ibid

[12] ibid, 2

[13] Clarisse Bader *Women in Ancient India*, p 4, cf the Homeric hymn quoted by Max Müller in his *India, What it can teach us?* p 156— Mother of Gods the wife of the starry Heaven

is so close that although her name is mentioned more than a hundred times in the *Ṛgveda*, she is exclusively adored only once[1]; otherwise she always finds mention in company of her lord, the heaven. As a joint pair they have six hymns[2] addressed to them. The association of the two is so consummate that even where she has been addressed alone she is praised for sending the rain of heaven from her cloud[3] and in this way the sense of association has been kept afresh. The dual compound Dyāvā-pṛthivī, with comparatively rare synonyms Dyāvā-kṣāmā[4] and Dyāvā-bhūmi,[5] are called parents and are styled as *pitarā*,[6] *mātarā*,[7] *janitrī*.[8] They are also separately addressed as father and mother[9] and are conceived as the progenitors of the gods (*devaputre*).[10] They are primeval parents[11] (*pūrvaje pitarā*) and they go on breeding 'all-round wide immortality'[12] (*amṛtam varīmabhiḥ*). The parents begin their career of procreation in a conjugal love the legality of which is later rendered unquestionable by the poet having married the couple off in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*.[13] Thus we find that at the very outset of the cosmic creation the parental responsibility asserts itself and the domestic sweetness springs up spontaneously.

Dyāvā-Pṛthivī have created the living beings and they maintain them.[14] Both are rich in seed[15] (*retaḥ, retasā*). Milk,

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1 *ṚV.*, V. 84
2 ibid., I. 159; 160; 185; VI. 70; VII. 53; X. 65, 8.
3 यत्ते अभ्रस्य विद्युतो दिवो वर्षन्ति वृष्टयः ॥ ibid., V. 84, 3.
4 A. A. Macdonell: *Vedic Mythology*, p. 126.
5 ibid.
6 *ṚV.*, I. 159, 2; VII. 53, 2; X. 65, 8.
7 ibid., I. 159, 3.
8 ibid., I. 185, 6.
9 ibid., I. 159, 1-3; 160, 2.
10 ibid., I. 159, 1; 185, 4; VII. 53, 1.
11 ibid., VII. 53, 2; X. 65, 8.
12 ibid., I. 159, 2; 185, 6.
13 IV. 27, 5-6.
14 *ṚV.*, I. 159, 2; 160, 2; 185, 1.
15 ibid., I. 159, 2; VI. 70, 1-2.

clarified butter and honey flow plentifully from them[1] and they also yield the gods' food ambrosia, *amrta* [2] In the manner of earthly parents tending and protecting their children they act as guardian deities guarding creatures and sheltering them from disgrace, calumny, misery and misfortune [3] They win them undying fame and glory, spacious lands and dominions and grant them nourishing food and endless riches [4] Due to their gender they are also alluded to as sisters [5]

The Earth is further praised under the name of some agricultural deities, like the land[6] (*ksetra*) and the furrow[7] (*sita*) Sitā in later literature[8] appears as the wife of Indra This is natural as Indra is the god of rain and thunder who sends his showers and fertilizes the furrow, that is Sitā, which receives the seed and yields the crop This is why Indra bears the epithet of *urvarapati* [9] 'the lord of the field It is again natural that in the *Ramāyana* Rāma, meaning Indra should have married a wife named Sitā obtained from a furrow newly ploughed by Janaka progenitor, during a terrible draught Sitā of the Rgvedic context is invoked to grant rich blessings and crops [10] The Rsi prays

Sita

"Approach, thou, O fortunate Earth surnamed Sitā We honour thee that thou mayest be for us both propitious and fruitful [11]

'May Sitā yield us abundant milk for many years [12]

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1 *RV* VI 70 1 5
2 ibid, I 159 2, 185 6
3 पातामवद्यादुरितादभीके पिता माता च रक्षतामवाभि ॥ ibid I 185 10
4 ibid VI 70 6 I 159 5
5 सगच्छमान युवती समन्त स्वासारा जामी पित्रोरुपस्थ । ibid I 185 5
6 ibid IV 57
7 ibid 57, 6 and 7
8 *Paraskara Grhyasutra* II 17 9
9 *RV* VIII 21 3 cf IV 57 7
10 यथा न सुभगाससि यथा न सुफलसमि ibid IV 57 6
11 ibid
12 सा न पयस्वती दुहामुत्तरामुत्तरा समाम् ॥ ibid 7

"May the ploughshares successfully till the land for us; may our shepherds happily lead their flocks...."[1]

Uṣā

The most beautiful conception of a goddess which the *Ṛgveda* presents to us is that of Uṣā, the Dawn, the Indian *Eos*. Macdonell[2] writes: "Uṣas is the most graceful creation of Vedic poetry and there is no more charming figure in the descriptive religious lyrics of any other literature. The brightness of her form has not been obscured by priestly speculation nor has the imagery as a rule been marred by references to the sacrifice." As many as twenty hymns[3] are exclusively addressed to her which make up the best portion of the Ṛgvedic poetry. Her name occurs in the *Ṛgveda* more than 300 times! She is the goddess of the dawn and so most naturally she strikes the Indian Tithonus as a resplendent and bright inspirer of life and love from the transparent blue. She is the daughter of the sky[4] (*duhitar-divaḥ*), the lady of the light[5] (*vibhāvari rāyā*) and the radiant mover of sweet sounds with wealth of horses and cows.[6] She is conceived as a matron carefully tending everything, rousing all life, stirring all creatures that have feet and making the birds fly up.[7] She is the breath and life of everything.[8] She sends the busy forth, each man to his pursuit.[9] The same like a divine protector shines foes and enmity away[10] (*ucchadapa-sridhaḥ*).

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[1] शुन नः फाला वि कृपन्तु भूमिं शुनं कीनाशा अभि यन्तु वाहैः।
शुनं पर्जन्यो मधुना पयोभिः शुनासीरा शुनमस्मासुधत्तम् ॥ ṚV., 8; also cf. ibid., IV. 4

[2] *Vedic Mythology*, p. 46.

[3] *ṚV.*, I. 48; 49; 92 (Usas and Aśvins); 113 (Uṣas and Night); 123; 124, III. 61; IV. 30; 51; 52; V. 79; 80; VI. 75-81; X. 172.

[4] ibid, I. 30, 22; 48, 9; 2; दिवो दुहिता ibid., 92, 5; 48, 8.

[5] ibid., 92, 14; 48, 10.

[6] उषो प्रचह गोमत्यश्वावति विभावरि। ibid.

[7] आ घा योषेव सूनर्युषा याति प्रभुञ्जती। जरयन्ती वृजनं पद्वदीयत उत्पातयति पक्षिणः॥ ibid., I. 48, 5 and 10; 49, 3.

[8] विश्वस्य हि प्राणनं जीवनं त्वे....ibid., I. 48, 10.

[9] ibid., 6.

[10] ibid., I. 48, 8.

To the religious Aryan who could be a greater helper than Usā, who brought all his gods from the firmament so that they might accept his offerings?[1] She unites men with gods[2] and causes Agni to be kindled.[3] She awakes before the rest of the world,[4] and just as a mistress, rising in the morning, opens the doors of her house; so also does she dispel the darkness at the end of night and opens the gates of heaven.[5] She quickens every creature to motion.[6] The Dawns waken the drowsy and instil motion and vigour into the bipeds and quadrupeds.[7] *In the morning when Usā shows herself forth, birds take to* wings and men leave their beds in quest of food and nourishment.[8] She wakens the five tribes and reveals and illumines the path of men.[9] She unfolds all creatures, confers fresh life[10] and drives away evil dreams to Trita Āptya.[11] By dispelling her darkness[12] she removes the black robe of night.[13] She drives away the despicable spirits and the detested darkness.[14] The darkness of the night having been warded off the manifold treasures ensconced in it are laid bare which she now distributes bountifully.[15] When she awakes in the morning the ends of the sky are lit up.[16] She is herself sometimes spoken of as awakened by worshippers with their prayers.[17] She is

1 विश्वान्देवाँ आ वह सोमपीतयेऽन्तरिक्षादुषस्त्वम् । *Rv.*, I 12.
2 ibid, I. 113, 9.
3 ibid.
4 ibid, I. 123, 2.
5 उषो यदद्य भानुना वि द्वारावृणवो दिवः । ibid, I 48, 15, 113, 4
6 विश्वं जीवं चरसे बोधयन्ती ibid, I 92, 9, VII 77, 1
7 *ibid, IV. 51, 5*
8 ibid, I. 124, 12
9 व्युषा आव पथ्या जनानां पञ्च क्षितीर्मानुषीर्बोधयन्ती । ibid, VII 79, 1
10 ibid, 80, 1 and 2
11 ibid, VIII. 47, 14 and 16.
12 ibid, VI. 64, 3; 65, 2
13 ibid, I. 113, 14.
14 ibid., VII. 75, 1.
15 ibid, I. 123, 4 and 6.
16 व्यूर्ण्वती दिवो अन्ताँ अबोध्यप स्वसारं सनुतर्युयोति । ibid, I. 92, 11.
17 ibid., IV. 52, 4; VII. 80, 1.

invoked to arouse the liberal and the devout and to let alone the ungodly and the niggard.[1]

The goddess shines like a mother bending her kind looks on all the world below.[2] But then because she is conceived as a woman the poet brings her down to the earth from the heaven and paints her as a real woman, charming and graceful. She is a maiden decked by her mother showing her form[3], who generates motion in every living being and understands the voice of each adorer.[4] The poet becomes more fanciful, even extravagantly inspired, when he likens her to a professional dancer (*nṛtūriva*) who arrays herself in gay, embroidered garments and lays bare (*upornute*) her breasts (*vakṣa*) just as a cow yields her udder.[5] In a most beautiful verse of delicate imagery she is described as an ancient goddess, (*purāṇī*) ever young, born again and again (*punaḥpunarjāyamānā*) decking her beauty with the self-same raiment (*varṇam*) and wasting away the life (*jarayantyāyuḥ*) of mortals (*marttasya*) in the manner of a skilled butcher (*śvaghnīva*) cutting birds in pieces (*kṛtnurvija āminānā*).[6] Clothed in light, the maiden appears in the eastern horizon and unveils her maddening charms[7] to the beholders. The immortal goddess (*amṛtā*) has shone in days of yore, she shines to-day and she will shine hereafter, never aging (*ajarā*).[8] Like a shining silver wheel she revolves ever anew[9] and ever "shortening the ages of men, she shines forth,

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[1] *ṚV.*, I. 124, 10; IV. 51, 3.

[2] ibid., I. 92, 9.

[3] सुसङ्काशा मातृमृष्टेव योषाविस्तन्वं कृणुषे दृशेकम् । ibid., I. 123, 11.

[4] विश्वं जीव चरसे बोधयन्ती विश्वस्य वाचमविदन्मनायोः । ibid., I. 92, 9.

[5] अधि पेशांसि वपते नृतूरिवापोर्णुते वक्ष उस्रेव बर्जहम् । ibid., I. 92, 4.

[6] पुनः पुनर्जायमाना पुराणी समानं वर्णमभि शुम्भमाना ।
श्वघ्नीव कृत्नुर्विज आमिनाना मर्तस्य देवी जरयन्त्यायुः ॥ ibid., 10.

[7] एषा दिवो दुहिता प्रत्यदर्शि ज्योतिर्वसाना समना पुरस्तात् । ibid., 124, 3.
उपो अदर्शि शुंध्युवो न वक्षो नोधा इवाविरकृत प्रियाणि । ibid., 4.

[8] शश्वत्पुरोषा व्युवास देव्यथो अद्येदं व्यावो मघोनी ।
अथो व्युच्छादुत्तराँ अनु द्यूनजरामृता चरति स्वधाभिः ॥ ibid., 113, 13; 113, 15.

[9] समानमर्थं चरणीयमाना चक्रमिव नव्यस्या ववृत्स्व ॥ ibid., 61, 3.

the last of the dawns that have always gone, the first of those to come "[1] Effulgent in peerless beauty she does not give her light with discrimination but she floods the entire world, all small and great, with her brilliant torch [2] Rising resplendent as from a bath, showing her charms she approaches with light, dispelling the darkness [3] This description indeed puts Tennyson's *Tithonus*[4] into the shade both as regards rhythm as well as sublimity of ideas, while the similarity of the expression of the two poets remains striking The Dawn is borne on a chariot which is bright[5] (*vibhāhi candrarathā*) and brilliant,[6] shining and resplendent[7] (*jyotismatā*), well adorned[8] (*supesasam*) and all adoring[9] (*śubhrā*), massive[10] (*brhata*) and self yoked[11] (*svadhayā yujyamānam*) She comes driving in such a chariot drawn by fleeting resplendent steeds[12] of a ruddy hue,[13] ever yoked[14] and unresisting [15] The red morning clouds are said in a verse[16]

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[1] अमिनती दैव्यानि व्रतानि प्रमिनती मनुष्या युगानि ।
ईयुषीणामुपमा शश्वतीनामायतीनां प्रथमोषा व्यद्यौत् ॥ *RV* I 124 2

[2] ibid , 6

[3] ibid V 80, 5 and 6

[4] By the strong hours indignant work'd their wills
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me
And tho' they could not end me left me maimed
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn
I earth in earth forget these empty courts
And thee returning on thy silver wheels

[5] *RV*, III 61, 2

[6] ibid , I 23 7

[7] ibid , VII 78, 1

[8] ibid , I 49 2

[9] ibid , VII 75, 6

[10] ibid , I 48 10

[11] ibid , VII 78 4

[12] ibid , V 79, 1 10

[13] ibid , VII 75 6

[14] ibid , IV 51 5

[15] ibid , III 61, 2

[16] ibid , I. 92 2 also cf I 124 11 , V 80, 3

to be the cows drawing her chariot. She drives in a hundred chariots[1] all at once and traverses thirty *yojanas* a day[2] (*trinśatam yojanāni*).

Her functions are allied to those of a matron in the agricultural Aryan home and she is frequently associated with the cattle. She unfastens the gates of darkness as the cows their stalls.[3] Her radiant rays look like herds of cattle.[4] She is discernible from a distance leading and scattering out the cattle (*paśūn*).[5] "The ruddy beams fly up, the ruddy cows yoke themselves, the ruddy dawns weave their web (of light) as of old."[6] Constant association with the cows gives Uṣā the epithet, 'mother of kine'[7] (*mātā gavām*).[8]

Everyday Uṣā appears at the appointed spot and she never infringes the ordinances of order and of the gods.[9] She is fully acquainted with her way and proceeds unerringly on the path of order.[10] She is besought not to tarry but to rush forth so that the sun may not scorch her as a thief or an enemy.[11] She brings with her the train of gods to drink soma.[12] She makes the path for Sūrya to travel[13] and brings this eye of the gods on the horizon and guides the spotless beautiful horse.[14]

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1 शतं रथेभि *ṚV.*, I 48, 7.

2 ibid., I. 123, 8.

3 ibid., I 92, 4.

4 ibid., IV 52, 2 and 4

5 ibid., I. 90, 12.

6 ते हि वस्वो वसवानास्ते अप्रमूरा महोभिः । व्रता रक्षन्ते विश्वाहा । ibid., 2.
Trans. by A. A. Macdonell : *Vedic Mythology*, p. 47.

7 Kuhn : *Enturchlungsstufen*, p. 131.

8 IV. 52, 2 and 3 ; VII. 77, 2.

9 अमिनती दैव्यानि व्रतानि ibid., I. 92, 12 ; 124, 2 ; VII. 76, 5 ; ऋतस्य योषा न मिनाति धामाहरहर्निष्कृतमाचरन्ती ॥ ibid., I. 123, 9.

10 ऋतस्य पन्थामन्वेति साधु प्रजानतीव न दिशो मिनाति ॥ ibid., V. 80, 4.

11 ibid., 79, 9.

12 विश्वान्देवाँ आ वह सोमपीतयेऽन्तरिक्षादुषस्त्वम् । ibid., I. 48, 12.

13 ibid., I. 113, 16.

14 देवानां चक्षुः सुभगा वहन्ती श्वेतं नयन्ती सुदृशीकमश्वम् । ibid , VII. 77, 3.

She gets aglow with the light of her lover[1] (*jārasya*), the sun[2] Sūrya follows her as a young man chases a maiden,[3] and then at last she accepts and meets the god who desires her[4] She is conceived as both his wife[5] and mother[6] accordingly as he follows her and she precedes him Besides being described as daughter, wife and mother, she is also conceived as sister She is thus the sister of Bhaga[7] and the kinswoman of Varuna[8] Dawn and Night have been *frequently alluded to in a dual* compound (*usāsānaktā* or *naktosāsā*), both standing in relationship of sisters[9] to each other, the Dawn sometimes referred to as the elder sister of the Night[10] To Dyaus Usā is both a daughter,[11] *being born in the sky*,[12] as *well as a beloved*[13](*priyā*) because perhaps she rests in the lap of the firmament Agni, being an aspect of the sun, has also been called her lover[14] He goes to meet the radiant Usā as she comes, and begs for her fair riches[15] She is also often associated with the twin gods of the early morning, the Aśvins,[16] and is once connected with the moon[17]

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1 योपा जारस्य चक्षसा विभाति । *RV* I 92 11

2 चक्षसा सूर्यस्य ibid I 113, 9

3 सूर्यो देवीमुषसं रोचमाना मर्यो न योषामभ्येति पश्चात् ।
यत्रा नरो देवयन्तो युगानि वितन्वते प्रति भद्राय भद्रम् ॥ ibid I 115 2

4 *RV*, I. 123 10

5 सूर्यस्य योषा ibid VII 75 5 पत्नी सूरो ibid *IV* 5 13

6 ibid, VII 78 3

7 भगस्य स्वसा ibid, I 123 5

8 वरुणस्य जामि ibid

9 समानबन्धू ibid, I 113, 2, स्वस्रो ibid, 3, स्वसारमस्कृतोषस ibid, X 127, 3

10 ibid, I 124 8

11 ibid, I 30 22 48, 9, 49 2 48, 8, 92 5

12 ibid, VII 75 1 cf X 89 12

13 ibid, I 46 1

14 *ibid*, I 69, 1, VII 10, 1, *cf* X 3, 3

15 ibid III 61, 6

16 ibid, I 44 2, 183, 2 IV 52 2 and 3 VIII 9, 17, III 58, 1, X 39, 12

17 ibid, X 85, 19

The Ṛṣi often implores Uṣā to dawn upon the worshipper, to bring to him riches and progeny, to bestow protection and long life[1] and to confer fame and glory on all his liberal benefactors.[2] In filial joy he prays to her for motherly affection.[3] While during his supplication of the goddess he visions her as receiving the soul of the dead man[4] and as the Fathers sitting in her lap,[5] the incubus of a sad reaction all of a sudden siezes him in an iron grip. The poet is staggered by the force of a remorseful reflection, and he wails: "How long is it since Aurora has been coming to visit us?....They are dead, the human beings who beheld the splendour of the ancient Aurora: we shall meet their fate, we who are beholding her to-day; they also will die, those who will behold the Aurora of the future."

Rātri

Rātrī, the Night, is invoked in a single hymn[6] and is styled like her sister Uṣā in the domestic epithet of the daughter of heaven[7] (*duhitardivaḥ*). Goddesses behave as sages make them do. The Aryan was gay, never pensive; that is why even the Night does not strike abhorrence in him and, forgetting her dark aspect he visions only the bright starlit one. She is all agog with eyes, and decking herself with exceptional splendour she floods the valleys and altitudes with light and drives away darkness[8] (*jyotiṣā bādhate tamaḥ*). At her advent men retrace their steps to their homes and birds fly back to their nests.[9]

Where Uṣā and Rātrī, the Dawn and Night, are addressed jointly as a dual compound they conjure up vivid pictures of

[1] *ṚV*., I. 30, 22; 48, 1.

[2] ibid., V. 79, 6; cf. I. 48, 4.

[3] वयं स्याम मातुर्न सूनवः ॥ ibid., VII. 81, 4.

[4] ibid., X. 59, 8.

[5] ibid., 15, 7.

[6] ibid., X. 127.

[7] ibid., 127, 8.

[8] ibid., X. 127, 2 and 3.

[9] नि ग्रामासो अविक्षत नि पद्वन्तो नि पक्षिणः. ibid., X. 127, 5.

domestic affection These rich goddesses,[1] the divine maidens,[2] are the lovely daughters of heaven[3] Sometimes they are visioned as two wives[4] abounding in milk[5] Once the Rgvedic poet thinks of a maiden born, he soon imagines her growing fast into an adolescent *belle*, a loving housewife and an affectionate mother with breasts teeming with milk The Dawn and the Night in like manner suckle (being co wives) a single child who beams between heaven and earth[6] They are two sisters, of one mind but of different colour, whose path is the same and endless, who, taught by the gods, move alternately and never clash or stand still'[7] They are the radiant mothers of the eternal ordinances of Nature[8] They conduct every offering with bright beams[9] and thus weave the web of sacrifice[10] They are bountiful, great and well adorned and sit on the grass for the offering[11] Appearing alternately they awaken all living creatures[12]

Dawn and Night

Sūryā,[13] one of the goddesses of the *Rgveda*, is the typical Aryan bride She remains to this day the Hindu ideal of a bride and it is the prayers associated with her marriage which are generally uttered even now on the occasion of a Hindu marriage

Surya

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[1] *RV* II 31 5 X 70 6

[2] योषणे दिव्ये ibid VII 2 6 X 110 6

[3] ibid V 41 7 X 70 6

[4] पत्नी ibid I 122 2

[5] ibid II 3 6

[6] नक्तोषासा वर्णमामेम्याने धापयेते शिशुमेकं समीची ।
द्यावाक्षामा रुक्मो अन्तर्विभाति देवा अग्निं धारयन्द्रविणोदाम् ॥ ibid, I 96 5

[7] ibid I 113 3

[8] ऋतस्य मातरा ibid, I 142 7

[9] ibid 41 7

[10] तन्तुं ततं संवयन्ती ibid II 3 6

[11] ibid X 36 1 110 6 I 13 7 142 7

[12] ibid VII 2 6

[13] ibid II 31 5

[14] ibid I 34 5 116 1 17 117 13 118 5 119 5 IV 43 2 43 6 V 46 8 73 5 VI 58 4 63 5 VII 68 3 69 4 VIII 8 10 29 8 X 29 I 85 9 and 86, 184 2 etc

Sūryā is the light of the sun which is lent to the moon with which the latter shines and this transference of light from one to the other has generated in the Aryan poet some tender, humane feelings of the hearth. The sun, where the light, Sūryā, is generated and has her abode, is conceived as her father and the moon, Soma, as her husband. A marriage[1] is arranged between Sūryā and Soma in which the Aśvins, the twin gods of the morning and evening-twilight, representing the transition of the sun's light, play the bestmen and carry the bride in their chariot to her groom.[2] This daughter of Sūrya[3] (*sūre duhitā*) was given by her father over to her wooer (*vadhūyu*), Soma, who became her husband (*patye*) and it was then that the Aśvins acted as the groomsmen[4] (*varā*). In another passage the gods are said to have given her to Pūṣan.[5] Very commonly the Aśvins themselves are mentioned as Sūryā's husbands. They are called her two husbands[6] (*patī*) whom she chose[7] (*vṛṇīta*). Sūryā,[8] the maiden[9] (*yoṣaṇā*), mounted their chariot[10] (*ratham*) or chose[11] (*vṛṇīta*) it. The Aśvins possess her 'as their own,[12] and carry her away in their car.[13] She is consequently styled as Aśvinī.[14] We shall have occasion later to refer to her in certain detail.

Indrāṇī, otherwise known as Śacī Paulomī, the powerful consort of Indra, personifies the Indian conception of the

1 ṚV., X. 85, 9.
2 ibid., X. 85, 9; 85, 26
3 ibid., I. 34, 5; दुहिता सूर्यस्य ibid, I. 116, 17; 118, 5.
4 ibid., X. 85, 9.
5 ibid., VI. 58, 4.
6 ibid., IV. 43, 6; cf. I. 119, 5.
7 ibid., VII. 69, 4.
8 ibid., V. 73, 5.
9 ibid., VIII. 8, 10.
10 ibid., I. 34, 5; 116, 17; 118, 5; VI. 63, 5.
11 ibid., I. 117, 13; IV. 43, 2.
12 ibid., VII. 68, 3.
13 ibid., VIII. 29, 8.
14 ibid., V. 46, 8.

woman's place in the household where she reigns (*ketuh, mūrdhā*) as the supreme mistress[1] She is a source of strength to her husband[2] and the object of his whole-hearted devotion and loyalty.[3] Her sons are the destroyers of enemies and her daughter is great[4] In a verse[5] of striking lyrical beauty of which she is herself the Rsi she declares her might and absolute sway: "I am without a rival (*asapatnā*), I have no longer an enemy, I triumph in destroying the passing glory (*abhibhūvarī*) and the fleeting riches of those women (*anyāsām varco*) who were desiring to eclipse me'[6] She is a wife with several rivals (*sapatnī*) whom she fights and destroys[7]

Indrānī

(One of the most dramatic and powerful hymns of the *Rgveda* is uttered by Vāc, the daughter of Ambhrna She is herself the Rsi of the hymn[8] and is conceived as the goddess presiding over speech In her utterance she emphatically expresses the idea of the unity of the universe She is the force that bends the bow for Rudra that his arrow may strike and slay the hater of devotion (*brahmadvise*) She rouses and orders battle for the people and pervades heaven and earth[9] She it is who brings forth the father (*pitaram*), i e the sun, on the summit (*mūrdhan*) of the world; her dwelling is in the ocean (*samudra*) from where she extends over all existing creatures and touches even the far off heaven with her forehead[10] She breathes a

Vāc

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[1] अहं केतुरहं मूर्धाहमुग्राविवाचिनी । *RV*, X 159 2

[2] येनेन्द्रो हविषा कृत्व्यभवद्युम्न्युत्तम । ibid, X 159 4

[3] ibid, 1 2

[4] ममपुत्रा शत्रुहणोऽथो मे दुहिता विराट् । ibid, 3

[5] ibid, X 159

[6] असपत्ना सपत्नघ्नी जयन्त्यभिभूवरी । आवृक्षमन्यासां वर्चो राधो अस्थेयसामिव ॥ ibid 5

[7] ibid, X 145, ibid, 159

[8] ibid, X 125

[9] अहं जनाय समदं कृणोम्यहं द्यावापृथिवी आ विवेश ॥ ibid X 125, 6

[10] ibid, X 125, 7

strong breath which generates a tempest while she holds together all existence. Mighty in her grandeur she appears 'from beyond the heavens and from beyond the earth'[1] (*paro divā para enā pṛthivyai*). She is the *Śabdabrahma* of the later times pervading the entire universe and accompanying all gods[2] (*viśvedevāḥ*). She is the primeval energy of the universe, the feminine counterpart of the creating and annihilating God. Her hymn[3] 'is made the basis of Śāktaism.'[4] Sir S. Radhakrishnan interprets her as 'the energy drawing forth from Paramātman the whole universe from ākāśa downwards.'[5] Here the conception of Vāc identified with the universal soul recalls to mind the later conception of Śivā, who is the inseparable half of Śiva. The goddess through this hymn establishes emphatically her important position in the governance of the universe. She is conceived as the real force, the guiding feminine principle in the scheme of creation and no work of God could be accomplished without his innately wedded *śakti*. In a passage of the *Ṛgveda* she has been actually called the queen of the gods, and divine.[6])

Ilā

Ilā, Sarasvatī, and Bhāratī are the three goddesses, who bring delight. Ilā, the rite, is the first teacher (*śāsanī*) of men[7] in the rules of sacrifice. She is the first high priestess[8] of the vedic religion. Since the clarified butter forms the chief ingredient of the offerings to gods, Ilā

[1] *ṚV.*, X. 125, 8.

[2] ibid., X. 125, 1.

[3] ibid., X. 125.

[4] *Indian Philosophy*, p. 487.

[5] ibid.

[6] *ṚV.*, VIII. 89, 10 and 11.

[7] इळामकृण्वन्मनुषस्य शासनीं..ibid., I. 31, 11.

[8] During the early stages of the human civilization the religious activities of men were mostly dominated by women. They were high priestesses all over the world. The Druids of Britain had three classes of Druidesses, viz. those who had their families and were appointed to carry out the duties attached to their office as priestesses of the temples; those who were the assistants to the Druids dwelling mostly with the latter and occasionally visiting their husbands;

has been given the epithet of 'butter-handed'[1] and 'butter-footed.'[2] She forms the triad with Sarasvatī and Bhāratī in the *Āprī* hymns. She also has her motherly traits. As feeder of Agni she is his mother.[3] She is also the mother of the herd (*yūtha*) and is connected with Urvaśī[4] the celestial courtesan. Later she becomes the daughter of Manu,[5] the subsequent codifier of social and religious rites, and of Mitrā-Varuṇa.[6]

Sarasvatī is the purifier[7] (*pāvakā*) and the flowing knowledge—the mighty flood[8] (*maho arṇaḥ*). She is the Indian Minerva, who incites all pleasant songs and inspires and brightens all gracious and pious speculations[9] (*cetantī sumatīnām*). She is the patron deity of all wisdom, imagination and invention and the protectress

Sarasvatī

and lastly, those who lived in retired seclusion. The first of the above class is represented by the sisterhood at Kildare in Ireland, who devoted themselves to the service of Bright, the goddess of poverty, medicine and smithy. The Kayans of Borneo have even to the present day preserved an interesting ceremony through which the consecrated priestess leads men and girls at a festival to the family's sacred field where she chants hymns while the men dig the land and the girls plant the rice seeds. The Dyaks also of that place had at a time women serving as the entire priestly caste In Assam where the matriarchal system is considerably in vogue female divinities hold the religious field and in Khyrim, the high priestess or the head of the state is a woman Women physicians occupy a very important position in the occult rites and practices of religion among the American Red Indians of the Algonquins Likewise priestesses were held in high honour who performed the mysterious agricultural rites for ensuring excellent harvest connected with the worship of Demeter and Persephone in ancient Greece.

1 *ṚV.*, VII. 16, 8.
2 ibid , X. 70, 8.
3 ibid., III. 29, 9 and 10.
4 ibid., V. 41, 19.
5 *SB.*, I. 8, 1, 8 ; XI. 5, 3, 5
6 ibid., I. 8, 1, 27 ; XIV. 9, 4, 27 ; *Āśv. Śr. Sū* , I. 7, 7.
7 *ṚV.*, I. 3, 10.
8 ibid , 12.
9 ibid , 11.

of fine arts. In most cases she has been associated with the Brahmāvarta river of her name as we shall see later. But there is no doubt that she has also an existence distinct from the river as she forms one of the celebrated triad with Ilā and Bhāratī or Mahī which is pre-eminently a class of non-physical and moral powers:

Bhāratī

Bhāratī,[1] one of the *Āprī* triad, is the all-surpassing (*viśvatūrtiḥ*) goddess of speech. She is the 'poetical union of gesture and voice,'[2] as also perhaps the personified offering of the Bharatas. Mahī is probably identical with her.

Hotrā and Varutrī

Hotrā,[3] the holy (*śuciḥ*), has her male counterpart in Agni. She is the personified invocation, while Varutrī[4] is one who is to be chosen, the excellent.

Saraṇyū

Saraṇyū,[5] Tvaṣṭā's daughter married to Vivasvān, is the mother of the primeval twins, Yama and Yamī.[6] Bloomfield makes efforts[7] to identify her with the sun-maiden Sūryā or Uṣā, the Dawn, which Macdonell approves,[8] but the identification can hardly stand scrutiny. The goddess is explained by the *Ṛgveda* itself as the wife of Vivasvān,[9] who is Sūrya and in later literature the story is narrated as to how the solar deity being too dazzling and hot for her, his orb had to be scraped by Tvaṣṭā, the father of the bride.

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[1] *ṚV.*, I. 22, 10.
[2] Clarisse Bader: *Women in Ancient India*, p. 8.
[3] *ṚV.*, I. 22, 10.
[4] ibid.
[5] ibid., X. 17, 1 and 2.
[6] यमस्य माता ibid.
[7] *JAOS.*, XV. 172-88.
[8] *Vedic Mythology*, p. 51.
[9] जाया विवस्वतो *ṚV.*, X. 17, 1.

Sinīvālī and Gungū

Sinīvālī[1] and Rākā[2] are lunar goddesses aiding the birth of children Gungū is also allied to them[3] Sinīvālī is mentioned as a sister of gods[4] She is invoked to grant offspring[5] She receives particular attention by the Ṛgvedic poet and is graphically portrayed as possessing an ideal feminine physique She is broad hipped[6] (*pṛthustuke*), fair armed (*subāhuh*), fair-fingered (*svangurih*), prolific (*susūmā bahusūarī*), a mistress of the family[7] In the *Yajurveda*[8] she becomes more marked by her 'fair braids (*sukapardā*), beauteous crest (*sukurīrā*) and lovely locks (*svaupaśā*)'[9] Perhaps it is these new features of hers added by the *Yajurveda* which have found favour with the pre-Mauryan clay-artist who lavishly finishes his terrorcotta female figurines with striking hair-coiffure of locks and braids, ample hips and slight waist These figurines are sometimes[10] identified with Sinīvālī, Aditi and Pṛthivī

Raka, Bṛhaddiva

Rākā, who is invoked with Sinīvālī, Sarasvatī, Dhisanā and Gungū, is a rich and bountiful goddess Bṛhaddivā, whose name occurs four times in the hymns to the Viśve devās, is called a mother[11] and is mentioned with Ilā, Sarasvatī and Rākā[12]

Sunṛtā,[13] Purandhi[14] and Dhisanā[15] are personified goddesses of abundance and plenty Purandhi is identical with

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[1] RV, II 32, X 184

[2] ibid, II 32, 7 V 42, 12

[3] ibid, II 32 8

[4] देवानामसिस्वसा ibid, II 32 6

[5] ibid, ibid, X 184 (invoked to strengthen the fœtus)

[6] ibid, II 32 6

[7] या सुबाहु स्वङ्गुरि सुषूमा बहुसूवरी । तस्यै विस्पत्न्यै ibid, II 32, 7

[8] XI 56

[9] सिनीवाली सुकपर्दा सुकुरीरा स्वौपशा ।

[10] V S Agrawala *Mathura Terracottas*, pp 22 25

[11] RV X 64 10

[12] ibid, II 31, 4, V 41 19, etc

[13] ibid, I 40, 8, X 141, 2

[14] ibid, V 42 5 II 31 4 etc

[15] ibid, I 22 10

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Pārendi,[1] the Avestan goddess of riches and plenty. Dhiṣaṇā has been mentioned about a dozen times in the *Ṛgveda*. Asumati[2] is the personification of the spirit-life and is implored to prolong life and grant strength and nourishment. Nirṛti[3] presides over decay, disease, dissolution and death.

Sunṛtā, Purandhi, Dhiṣaṇā, Asumati, Nirṛti

The *Ṛgveda* refers to a number of goddesses who are nothing but personified abstractions. They are Śraddhā, *Anumati*, Aramati and the common Dampati. Śraddhā, Faith, is symbolical of the innate yearning for the company of and devotion to the gods. All offerings and processes of sacrifice must be accompanied with faith. Offerings and prayers without faith win no merit and a mere mechanical chanting of hymns is of little avail. The sage sings: "Through Faith is Agni kindled, by faith is oblation offered."[4] All those who perform sacrifice draw near her[5] (*śraddhām upāsate*) for the strength of their prayers. But the winning of Śraddhā is not an easy task. She can be pleased only by a constant longing of the heart[6] (*hṛdayya yākūtyā*). She is therefore herself besought to endow the worshipper with faith. She is said[7] to be invoked in the morning, at noon and at night. In later literature her pedigree is traced to Sūrya[8] and Prajāpati[9] and 'her relationship is still further worked out in the Epics and the Purāṇās.'[10]

Śraddhā

Anumati

Anumati[11] is the personified favour of the gods. She is implored to be gracious and let her worshippers

[1] Yaṣt 8, 38.
[2] *ṚV*., X. 59, 5 and 6.
[3] ibid., 1-3.
[4] श्रद्धयाग्निः समिध्यते श्रद्धया हूयते हविः । ibid., X. 151, 1.
[5] ibid., 4.
[6] ibid.
[7] ibid., 5.
[8] *S.B.*, XII. 7, 3, 11.
[9] *T.B.*, II. 3, 10, 1.
[10] A. A. Macdonell: *Vedic Mythology*, p. 119.
[11] *ṚV*., X. 59, 6; ibid., 167, 3.

Aramati **Dampati**

long see the sun.[1] She is prayed for giving protection.[2] Aramati is the personified goddess of Devotion, Piety. Macdonell seeks out her counterpart in the *Avesta*, Aramaiti, 'a genius of earth as well as wisdom,'[3] but he, however, is of opinion that 'the personification can hardly go back to the Indo-Iranian period.'[4] Love itself is idolized, and, Dampati deified, for to the Aryan the act of procreation was something divine. To Dampati, conceived as a god and goddess, a hymn[5] has been addressed by the lady Ṛṣi Lopāmudrā and Agastya, her spouse. It is quite in the fitness of things that *Rati should have found her Ṛṣi in Lopāmudrā, who perhaps* stands more for an idea than for a physical personality as her name literally signifies one whose *mudrā*, i.e. sign or characteristic mark (sexual ?), has become extinct, who shows little sexusl instinct.

Pṛśni **Araṇyānī**

Pṛśni[6] is another mother goddess representing the mottled storm-cloud which has been sometimes called a speckled cow.[7] She is the mother of the Maruts.[8] Araṇyānī is the goddess of the woods, the sylvan vegetation. She is propitious and benevolent and never kills anybody, and men eat of the savoury fruit of her trees.[9] This queen of the wilderness, sweetly scented and redolent of balm (*āñjanagandhiṁ surabhiṁ*), is the mother of all forest population (*mṛgāṇām mātaram*) and she possesses plenty

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1 *ṚV.*, 59, 6.

2 ibid., 167, 3.

3 *Vedic Mythology*, p. 120.

4 ibid.

5 *ṚV.*, I. 92, 10.

6 ibid., I. 23, 10; 84, 10 and 11; VIII. 6, 19; 7, 10; 58, 8; VII. 103, 6 and 10.

7 चित्रा ibid., VIII. 58, 3.

8 उग्रा हि पृश्निमातरः ibid., I. 23, 10.

9 स्वादोः फलस्य जग्ध्वाय यथाकमं निपद्यते ॥ ibid., X. 146, 5.

of food even without tilling the land[1] (*bahvannāmakṛṣīvalām*).

Varuṇānī, Agnyānī

A whole hymn[2] is addressed to her. Varuṇānī[3] is the spouse of the mighty god Varuṇa and so is Agnyānī[4] of Agni.

Next we pass on to the fertilizing streams which have been addressed as mother goddesses by the patriotic Aryans. An entire hymn[5] (*Nadyo Devatā*) has been addressed to them, and, besides, their names occur in several other passages. Of the river goddesses, altogether twenty-one, known and unknown, the following are prominent, namely Sarasvatī, Sindhu,[6] Vipāśā, Paruṣṇī,[7] Asiknī,[8] Marudvṛdhā,[9] Vitastā,[10] Ārjīkīyā,[11] Kubhā,[12] Krumu,[13] Gomatī,[14] Suṣomā,[15] Śutudri,[16] Dṛṣadvatī, Yamunā,[17] Gaṅgā,[18] and Sarayū.[19]

Rivers

Sarasvatī

References to Sarasvatī are most prolific. She is lauded *in three complete hymns*[20] *of the Ṛgveda and in* several detached verses. The strength of her current[21] and her course[22] are the constant subject of allusion. She is visioned as a dear mother and is implored not to withhold her milk.[23] She has seven

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[1] आञ्जनगन्धिं सुरभिं बह्वन्नामकृषीवलाम् ।
प्राहं मृगाणां मातरमरण्यानिमशंसिषम् ॥ *ṚV.*, X 146, 6

[2] ibid., X. 146

[3] ibid., I. 22, 12.

[4] ibid.

[5] ibid., X. 75.

[6] ibid., X. 64, 9 , 75, 1. 2. 4. 6.

[7] इमं मे गङ्गे यमुने सरस्वति शुतुद्रि स्तोमं सचता परुष्ण्या ।
असिक्न्या मरुद्वृधे वितस्तयार्जीकीये शृणुह्या सुषोमया ॥ ibid., X. 75, 5.

[8] ibid. [9] ibid. [10] ibid. [11] ibid. [12] ibid., 6.

[13] ibid. [14] ibid. [15] ibid., 5. [16] ibid. [17] ibid.

[18] ibid.

[19] सरस्वती सरयुः सिन्धुरूर्मिभिः ibid., X. 64, 9.

[20] VI. 61 ; VII. 95 ; VII. 96.

[21] ibid., VI. 61, 2 and 8.

[22] ibid , VII. 96, 1 and 2.

[23] पयसा मा न आ धक् ibid., VI. 61, 13.

sisters,[1] and is the mother of rivers[2] and goddesses,[3] the very best of mothers[4] She is called the wife of a hero,[5] Sarasvān,[6] who is invoked by worshippers desiring wives and offspring, protection and plenty[7] She mounts the same chariot as the Fathers and comes to the sacrifice[8] She is a purifier[9] and is besought to bestow wealth progeny, immortality and vitality[10] She is also associated with the divinities assisting procreation[11] She is praised for having bestowed a son named Divodasa on Vadhryaśva[12] As mother (*amba*) she grants fame to the renowned[13] and her unfailing breast[14] yields wealth[15] of every kind By her act of granting riches, abundance and nourishment[16] she has won the title *subhaga*[17] bountiful She stimulates directs and prospers the devotions of her worshippers[18] She is addressed along with the goddesses of prayer[19] She destroys the revilers of the gods[20] but affords shelter to her worshippers and conquers their enemies[21]

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1 सप्तस्वसा *Ri* VI 61 10

2 अम्बितमे नदीतमे देवितमे सरस्वति ।
अप्रशस्ता इव स्मसि प्रशस्तिमम्ब नस्कृधि ॥ ibid II 41 16

3 ibid

4 अम्बितमे ibid

5 वीरपत्नी ibid VI 49 7

6 ibid VII 96 4 6

7 ibid

8 ibid X 17 8

9 पावका नः सरस्वती ibid I 3 10

10 ibid X 30 12 II 41 17

11 ibid X 184 2

12 दिवोदास वध्र्यश्वाय दाशुषे । ibid VI 61 1

13 ibid II 41 16

14 ibid I 164 49

15 रत्नधा वसुविद्‌ सुदत्र ibid

16 ibid VII 95 2 VIII 21 17 IX 67 32 X 17, 8 9

17 ibid I 89 3 VII 95 4 and 6 VIII 21 17

18 ibid I 3 10 11 II 3 8 VI 61 4

19 ibid VII 37 11 X 65 13

20 ibid VI 61 3 and 7

21 ibid VII 95 4 5 II 30 8 VI 49, 7

Sacrifices are performed on her banks and on those of the Dṛṣadvatī.[1] Her later character as a patroness of fine arts is hinted at in the *Ṛgveda* itself through her association with Iḷā and Bhāratī where she makes up with these the triad of the Āprī hymns. In the *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā*[2] and the *Brāhmaṇas*[3] she comes to be clearly connected with Vāc, speech.

Apsarases

A special class of celestial women, Apsarases, have also been treated as goddesses in the *Ṛgveda*. They signify nymphs and are associated with water. They are, however, mentioned only five times in the *Saṁhitā*. The Apsaras smiles at her lover,[4] the Gandharva. Thus her association with the Gandharvas is already established and her flirting favour hinted at. Still she possesses a son like Vasiṣṭha,[5] dwells in the highest heavens,[6] and her path is marked out in the sky.[7] Soon after in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[8] the Apsarases come to be engaged in pursuits like dance, music and frivolous play where they are referred to as possessing great beauty.[9] In the *Ṛgveda* their love is occasionally enjoyed by men,[10] besides the Gandharvas. Only one of them, Urvaśī, is specifically named. The reference is slightly vague, nevertheless conclusive, as Vasiṣṭha at one place is called the son of Urvaśī and at another of an Apsaras.[11] Therefore Urvaśī must be an Apsaras, and, then, besides, we have regular allusions in later literature to Urvaśī as a celestial courtesan. There is a beautiful dialogue[12] in the *Ṛgveda* between this

[1] *ṚV.*, III. 23, 4
[2] XIX. 12.
[3] *S.B.*, III. 9, 1. 7 ; *A.B.*, III. 1, 10.
[4] अप्सरा जारमुपसिष्मियाणा *ṚV.*, X. 123, 5.
[5] ibid., VII. 33, 12.
[6] योषा बिभर्ति परमे व्योमन् ibid., X. 123, 5.
[7] ibid., 136, 6.
[8] XI. 1.
[9] ibid., XIII. 4, 3, 7-8.
[10] X. 95, 9.
[11] ibid., VII. 33, 11-12
[12] X. 95.

nymph and Pururavas, her earthly lover and spouse The story is further narrated in the *Śatapatha Brahmana*[1] and romantically worked out by Kālidāsa in his celebrated play entitled the *Vikramorvaśī*

(The rôle played by the goddesses in the *Rgveda*, the earliest literary document of mankind, is of singular importance, although Macdonell thinks otherwise[2]) It is true that they are not so terrific and warring as their divine spouses or sons, but *this is simply* because *they have been endowed with the* tender traits of a woman tending the hearth Gods are the real Aryan men, fighting and vanquishing their enemies, while goddesses are women abounding in virtues of the heart It is not logical to show that they are insignificant simply because in many cases the names have been formed by feminine endings of those of their spouses, nor is it wise to judge them by statistical standards It is enough that the Aryans could seldom conceive of a *god without conceiving of a corresponding goddess* Even the satanic Vrtra is given a mother Dānu[3] (In fact anything that sounded feminine to the ear became a goddess to the respectful Aryan Indrānī, commanding her household is the all powerful source[4] of the strength of her husband Indra The vigour of Vac is unparallelled not only in other religious literatures of the world but even in the later Sanskrit literature itself Usā is the most tender and mighty conception of the human mind She is the veritable *dawn* of poetical genius Aditi is the progenitor of the entire universe and the great gods, and Prthivi is more important than Dyaus her husband All the fine arts are the sphere of the goddesses over which Sarasvati presides Prayers become the personified goddesses, and though they are addressed to gods the sacrifice is presided over by goddesses Gods alone are not the guests at the sacrifice Oblations are ready, gods are awaited and the Rsi prays to Agni

[1] XI 5 1

[2] *Vedic Mythology* pp 51 124

[3] Ṛk I 32 9

[4] येनेन्द्रो हविषा कृत्व्यभवद्युम्न्युत्तम ibid, X 159, 4

their harbinger, to bring them to the soma draught, but nc alone. Their wives must also accompany them, for it is not th organizer of the sacrifice alone that invokes them but also hi wife, and most naturally therefore the goddess must figur along with her lord. Hence the sage croons the prayer "Unite them, Agni, with their dames" (*patnīvataskṛdhi*). Thi sort of invocation is not an exception but very nearly the rule in the *Ṛgveda*. Neṣṭar is invited with his consort to the sacrifice and Agni is asked to bring the willing spouses (*patnīrihā*) of the gods.[1] Again Agni is besought to bring Hotrā, Bhāratī, Varutrī and Dhiṣaṇā[2], and the presence of a whole host of goddesses with great ardour and devotion is invoked.[3] The list is not yet exhausted and Indrāṇī, Varuṇānī and Agnyānī are invited for weal to drink the soma juice.[4]

But it may be remarked that the Ṛgvedic goddess was never too free. Just as the wife in the earthly home of the Ṛṣi commanded her household like an imperious matron, always under the protection and watch of the kind loving husband, so also did her divine sister behave under her lord in the Heaven. Even the Dawn, the freest and the most wilful, is conceived as the mother of a mighty son, the daughter of a great father and the beloved of a brilliant adorer. The most haughty Indrāṇī herself has a powerful Indra for her husband. Thus it is clear that in the spiritual sphere, which was more important for the devout Aryan than the secular one, the part played by the woman was deeply permeating.

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[1] अग्ने पत्नीरिहा वह देवानामुशती रुप ।
त्वष्टारं सोमपीतये ॥ *ṚV.*, I. 22, 9.

[2] आ ग्ना अग्न इहावसे होत्रां यविष्ठ भारतीम् ।
वरुत्री धिषणा वह ॥ ibid., 10.

[3] ibid.; ibid., 11-13.

[4] ibid., I. 22, 12.

Chapter II

THE MAIDEN

Rgvedic Aryans were a race devoted to home. Affection was deeply rooted in their heart Wife and children were their anxious concern who received all their love and care. Aryans had colonized a foreign land held and owned by a powerful and civilized race and were easily outnumbered by their enemies. They must have very often felt for and deprecated the comparative dearth of men and their consequent desire for more warriors was but natural We find a very frequent longing for a male child[1] in the *Rgveda* In such a state the importance of the woman becomes singular and the birth of a daughter as potential mother is not altogether unwelcome It is surprising, however, that no desire for the birth of a daughter is ever expressed in the entire range of the *Rgveda* Her birth is even deprecated in the *Atharva Veda*.[2] In this *Samhitā* references are made to mystic charms for undoing the effect of a female fœtus and for changing it into a male one [3] The *Aitareya Brāhmana*[4] preserves an ancient *gāthā* in which a daughter has been characterized as a misery (*krpanam*) But nevertheless, we find frequent references in the *Rgveda* to daughters being fondly caressed and affectionately brought up by parents They were lovingly treated by their mothers and shielded by the strength of their father and brother A simile has been drawn upon the relations of the female children with their parents to express the Heaven and Earth "Faring together, young, with meeting limits, twin sisters (*svasarā jāmī*) lying on their parents' bosom[5] (*pitrorupasthe*)" What a

Daughter—her place in the household

[1] I 91 20 92 13, III 1, 23, X 85 25 41 42 45

[2] VIII 6 25, VI 11 3

[3] VI 11 III 23

[4] VII 15

[5] संगच्छमाने युवती समन्ते स्वसारा जामी पित्रोरुपस्थे । RV I 185 5

contrast the daughter was to her Arabian sister, who met her death through burial. Before the appearance of Muhammad the horrible practice of burying alive of female infants prevailed among the Arabs. Perhaps prompted by some savage superstition, and certainly for economic and martial reasons, the cruel custom was indulged in upto the time of the prophet, who denounced it. "Kill not your children for fear of impoverishment," said he, "we will provide for them and for you: verily their killing is a great sin."[1] In the *Ṛgveda* we read the existence of the son and the daughter side by side, the former taking to the profession of the father while the latter inheriting the glory and honour[2] of her mother. Here the reference to the daughter receiving honour is one to her potential motherhood. Since the wife and mother were held in high regard, as we shall see later, the daughter also received her due share in the respect and love of her people. It is one desire of the couple to reach their full extent of life with sons and *daughters*[3] (*putriṇā tā kumāriṇā*) growing by their side. In another passage[4] a father is commended for having many excellent daughters as his quiver for containing unfailing darts, both being effective in assailing the hearts of men. We have several allusions to daughters fondly nourished in their parents' family and even growing old (*amājūriva*) while staying there.

The young girl was called by the name *duhitṛ*,[5] which term, denoting daughter, is found in almost all the Aryan

[1] *Qoran*, Ch. XVII.

[2] शासद्वह्निर्दुहितुर्नप्त्यं गाद्विद्वाँ ऋतस्य दीधितिं सपर्यन् ।
पिता यत्र दुहितुः सेकमृञ्जन्त्सं शग्म्येन मनसा दधन्वे ॥
न जामये तान्वो रिक्थमारैक्चकार गर्भंसनितुर्निधानम् ।
यदी मातरो जनयन्त वह्निमन्यः कर्ता सुकृतोरन्य ऋन्धन् ॥ *ṚV.*, III. 31, 1-2.

[3] पुत्रिणा ता कुमारिणा विश्वमायुर्व्यश्नुतः । ibid., VIII. 31, 8.

[4] बह्वीनां पिता बहुरस्य पुत्रश्चिश्चा कृणोति समनावगत्य ।
इषुधिः सङ्काः पृतनाश्च सर्वाः पृष्ठे निनद्धो जयति प्रसूतः ॥ ibid., VI. 75, 5.

[5] ibid., III. 31, 1. 2, etc,

languages. The etymology of her name indicates her principal duty in the Ṛgvedic family, namely the milking of the cow. S. C. Sarkar, following Delbrück[1] and the editors of the *Vedic Index*,[2] interprets her name as 'the potential nourisher of a child'[3] which interpretation is hardly tenable. Her association with milk and its other preparations is brought out in several instances. Sisters of priestly ministrants (*jāmayo adhvarīyatām*) mingle their sweetness with the milk (*pṛñcatīrmadhunā payaḥ*). The joyous maiden is beheld where the butter flows[4] (*rīyate ghṛtamā*). Thus milking of the cow and preparing clarified butter and curds seem to have been her chief concern. Besides tending the cow she had some other duties to perform. She had to do the work of the spinstress and she wove cloth (*tantum*) and embroidered garments.[5] Since women in general are referred to as sewing their mantle (*sīvyatvapaḥ*) with a never-breaking needle[6] (*sūcyācchidyamānayā*), girls also, as now, must have been employed in needlework. They brought water in jars[7] (*udakam kumbhinīriva*) from wells and watched the standing crops of the fields.[8] The custom of girls watching fields endured till the end of the classical period and has been referred to by Kālidāsa in his *Raghuvaṁśa*[9] where girls watch fields of paddy and sugarcanes and sing the panegyrics of Raghu as they do so.

Her duties

Thus we find that the maiden was mainly occupied with the domestic work. But it must be noted that material cares alone were not her lot and that she also received a liberal

[1] *Ind Ver* p 454

[2] Vol I p 371

[3] *Some Aspects of the Earliest Social History of India* p 104

[4] विसूनृता ददृशे रीयते घृतमा *RV* I 185, 7

[5] तन्तु ततं सवयन्ती समीची यज्ञस्य पेश सुदुघे पयस्वती । ibid , II 3, 6

[6] सीव्यत्वप सूच्याच्छिद्यमानया ददातु वीरं शतदायमुक्थ्यम् । ibid , 32 4

[7] तास्ते विप विजभ्रिर उदक कुम्भिनीरिव ॥ ibid , I 191, 14

[8] ibid , VIII 80

[9] इक्षुच्छायनिषादिन्यस्तस्य गोप्तुर्गुणोदयम् ।
आकुमारकथोद्घातं शालिगोप्यो जगुर्यश ॥ iv 20

education, for, side by side with men Ṛṣis, lady seers have also been credited with the composition of hymns as we shall see in due context. The affection that was bestowed on the maiden by her relatives and the place of importance that she enjoyed in the family would make Zimmer's[1] exposure of children a myth.

Her rights

Apart from her parents, her brother had some control over the maiden. This was bound to be for he was soon to occupy the place of the *paterfamilias* after the death of his father. He therefore looked after the social relation of his sister. He was a companion of hers and thus a great help, her chief *support* as his name *bhrātṛ*, the root of which may be traced in almost all the Indo-European languages, signifies. It was therefore feared that a free girl in the absence of a brother might go astray[2] and that gallants might take advantage of her helplessness.[3] Naturally the brother and sister were best acquainted with each other in the family. Sarkar[4] therefore thinks that *jñāti* [5] primarily meant brother and sister. Her claim to the protection which she required in her weakness is well recognised in the *Ṛgveda*. The Ṛṣi implores: "As a virtuous maiden, who lives with her father and mother, and expects from them the support to which her devotion to them gives her the claim, as such I come to ask thee for a share in thy favour."[6]

It will be well to consider here the legal status of the daughter. The evidence on this point is slightly conflicting and not quite conclusive as may well be supposed from the nature of the work. It would seem that she had some share

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[1] *Alt. Leb.*, pp. 319-20; cf Delbrück: *Ind. Ver.*, p. 595; Weber: *Ind. Stud.*, p. 5, 54, 260, etc. quoted in the *Soc. His. of Ind.*, p. 105.

[2] अभ्रातरो न योषणो व्यन्त. पतिरिपो न जनयो दुरेवा: ।
पापास: सन्तो अनृता असत्या इदं पदमजनता गभीरं ॥ *ṚV.*, IV. 5, 5.

[3] ibid.

[4] *Asp. of Soc. His. Ind.*, p. 77.

[5] *ṚV.*, X. 117, 9.

[6] Wilson: *Ṛgveda*, Vol. II. p. 257.

in the property of her father inasmuch as she was allowed as an unmarried daughter of the family not only to stay with her parents and brothers, but even to grow old[1] (*jūryanti*) in her father's family The *Atharva Veda*[2] even refers to daughters remaining in the parental family until death Unless she had some share in her father's property in her own right, it is difficult to comprehend how her long stay in the family was not resented The stay of a maiden in her father's family until she is married may be considered her birth right exercisable in any situation of life but her residence there until old age, or death, or even after her marriageable age is passed, would indicate the existence of such privileges in her favour as in certain cases would bind her almost perpetually to her father's family and permit her to enjoy its pleasures not as an act of paternal bounty but in her own right Thus her maintenance was her legal right and a charge on her father's property It ceased to have an effect only when she severed her connection from her paternal family after her marriage But if she chose to remain unmarried all her life she could yet depend on her right of maintenance in the family she was born into

Mention is made about the wealth being given away by the spouse's brother[3] (*syalat*) to his brother in law This is a clear reference to dowry and would go a long way to prove the girl's right in the ancestral property Wealth thus dowered passed to her as her separate property the *stridhana* of later times An unmarried daughter had her own ornaments which she could dispose of as she liked[4] It was at the time of marriage generally that she gave away riches and ornaments (*śamulyam, bhajū, vasu*) to Brahmins[5] This was evidently another item of the *stridhana*

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[1] *RV* I 117 7 अमाजू ibid II 17 7 X 39 3

[2] I 14 3

[3] अश्रवहि भूरिदा वत्तरा वा विजामातुरुत वा घा स्यालात । *RV* I 109 2

[4] परा देहि शामुल्यं ब्रह्मभ्यो विभजा वसु । ibid X 85 29

[5] ibid

The brother, a father's legitimate son—of the body (*tānva*)[1]—was the sole inheritor of the ancestral property, and in a passage of the *Ṛgveda*[2] he is even referred to as leaving no share of that property to his sister. But this very allusion would indirectly show that in the absence of her brother she inherited the property of her father in her own right and not through her son, though her son also elsewhere[3] has been made the heir to the property of his maternal grandfather. The latter case refers to a different context when the daughter had become a mother. The former reference would clearly place the claim of the daughter to her father's property over adopted and such other sons or over other cognate relations. As a matter of fact the idea of adoption was abhorrent[4] to the Ṛgvedic Aryan. There is another allusion in which it is said that 'many a maid is pleasing to the suitor who fain would marry for her splendid riches.'[5] Here is a clear evidence of inheritance of the ancestral property on the part of the daughter in her own right before her marriage. Naturally a plethora of suitors would be attracted to such a rich girl and they would vie with each other to win her love. Even if there were any disqualifications, such as lack of charms, education or culture, attaching to the person of the bride their effect would be easily overcome by the corresponding attraction of money. Indeed, otherwise the job to find a husband would not be easy for a maiden lacking in worth and accomplishments particularly in a free society like the Ṛgvedic one where girls vied with each other to gain a husband. To such a girl wealth would prove a sure assistance as there was naturally no dearth of needy young men, who would fain marry her 'for her splendid riches' (*panyasā vāryeṇa*).[6] For one who was gifted with both worth

[1] *ṚV.*, III. 31, 2.

[2] ibid.

[3] ibid., 1.

[4] न शेषो अग्ने अन्यजातमस्त्यचेतानस्य मा पथो वि दुक्षः ॥ ibid., VII. 4, 7; cf. ibid., 8.

[5] कियती योषा मर्यतो वधूयोः परिप्रीता पन्यसा वार्येण । ibid., X. 27, 12.

[6] ibid.

and wealth the period of wooing would have been one of enough pride and flirtation It has been asserted that for such a maiden it was easy to find a 'friend'—a lover and prospective husband—among the people [1]

The above discussion may show that the daughter had an assigned share in the property. A few more points may be mentioned in this connection. Verse III, 31,2 has already been referred to above. It reads: "The son left not the portion to the brother, he made a home to hold him who should gain it "[2] This makes it clear that a person was at liberty to leave his share in the property to his daughter and to his *son-in-law through her in defiance of his brother* This would be contrary to the principle of the Hindu Mitākṣarā Law which awards such share to the nearest cognate relation of the father in a joint family. It is obvious that the Rgvedic system was more alive to the rights and susceptibilities of the woman Another passage in the *Rgveda*[3] points out that *the daughter's* son could succeed to the property of his maternal grandfather and thus a 'sonless man gained a grandson through his daughter '

Freedom

The maiden enjoyed singular freedom which may appear almost exceptionable to the modern Hindu accustomed to impose endless restrictions upon his women Seclusion of women was absolutely unknown, and the maiden was free to move anywhere she liked She appeared gay and smiling on festive occasions and tournaments (*samana*).[4] The *Samanas*, which were generally tournaments where the horse and chariot racing[5] was the special feature by the day, specially attracted the maidens by night There in the brilliant torch light[6] they appeared, duly decked

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¹ भद्रा वधूर्भवति यत्सुपेशा । स्वय सा मित्र वनुते जने चित् । *RV*, X 10, 12

² न जामये तान्वो रिक्थमारैक्चकार गर्भं सनितुर्निधानम । *RV*

³ III 31, 1

⁴ ibid, I 48, 6, 124, 8, IV 58, 8, VII 2, 5, 9, 4, X 86, 10

⁵ ibid, X 168, 2

⁶ सुसन्दृशा भानुना यो विभाति ibid, VII 9, 4

and amorously smiling[1] (*smayamānāso*) and there they sometimes spent the whole night.[2] The most striking feature of the *samana* was the wooing of lovers.[3] Such unrestrained freedom was naturally not always desirable and made the maiden at times daring enough to elope with her lover.[4] She made appointments and kept them. Her open meetings with her lover at trysts[5] made her bold enough to secretly receive her paramour at night in her own chamber.[6] Freedom of this sort was sure to result in occasional moral laxities.

The daughter in a Ṛgvedic family was thus not a meek, shy and weak creature like her modern representative in the Hindu family, but she was bold, free, and strong. The maiden was an individual with a distinct personality that thought and acted. The graceful dignified wife that she was later destined to be must need have a proper beginning and even during her early adolescence she proved beyond doubt that she was worthy of the responsibility with which she was soon to be entrusted. In the Ṛgvedic family the status of the wife and mother was one of remarkable importance and so the society gave to its maiden the proper degree of boldness which was expected to generate in her a sweet yet imperious temper which was necessarily required for the command[7] and management of a household ringing with the activities of free men and working slaves.[8]

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[1] *ṚV.*, IV. 58, 8.
[2] ibid., I. 48, 6; cf. X. 69, 11.
[3] ibid., VII. 2, 5.
[4] ibid, I. 112, 19; 116, 1; 117, 20; X. 39, 7; 65, 12.
[5] जारिणीव ibid, X. 34, 5.
[6] ibid, I. 134, 3.
[7] ibid., X. 85, 46.
[8] ibid., I. 126, 3; V. 47, 6; VI. 27, 8; VII. 18, 22; VIII. 19, 36; 68, 17; cf. ibid., I. 18, 1; 112, 11.

Chapter III

MARRIAGE

Marriage was a flourishing institution in the Rgvedic society It was almost a natural need In the whole range of the *Rgveda* there is not the slightest indication of its evolution or establishment through the human agency The *Mahabharata*[1] refers to a period in the history of mankind when the woman was approached by man whenever he felt the urge to mate This epic preserves legends which depict evidently the life of an age much anterior to that envisaged by the *Rgveda* and which warrant the existence of an anarchic condition of the society before marriage got the recognition of an established social institution The *Rgveda* knows of no such historical development The institution had taken root long before the hymns were composed and the memory of the Rgvedic poet could not recall to itself the age when marriage had not yet become binding on men and women or even conceive a period when marital ties were loose Already it had been given a religious sanctity and was performed under an elaborate system of rites The married state of an individual alone was normal and the Rsi dwells at length on the happiness of the couple bound through a sacramental wedlock

There is no doubt about the fact that marriage was evolved at a considerably advanced stage of human civilization It is to some extent an incident of culture If the *Rgveda*, as a literary document, was composed in the second millennium before Christ, as is generally held it can be shown that marriage as a well established and flourishing institution had already become a common feature of the day During the age of the *Rgveda* and about five centuries earlier Egypt was a land where marriage was obtaining well, and we

[1] Vide the legends regarding Śvetaketu and Dirghatamas in *Mbh* I Ch 122 vs 4724-35 and ibid Ch 104 v 4202ff respectively

know that both the king and the queen were objects of adoration in the land of the Nile. The pyramids disclose mummies of both the sovereign and his wife together with the valuable objects which had been kept there to form some of the amenities that they had enjoyed during their eternal rest. There is only one civilization yet known which is supposed to be anterior to that represented by the great royal dynasties of Egypt. This is the chalcolithic civilization of the Indus valley the vestiges of which have been recently laid bare by the spade from the mounds of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. The antiquities that have been unearthed at those sites undoubtedly give ample testimony to the existence of a highly developed material civilization which had never been equalled anywhere in the ancient world of Egypt, Assyria, Akkad and Elam. But we are not sure if marriage had become an established institution there. The inscriptions of the Indus valley are being deciphered by many scholars and the future might crown their efforts with success and throw some light on the institution of marriage.

Marriage

It is commonly held by anthropologists that birds and monkeys show a natural tendency to stick to a single mate and to cohabit exclusively with it for a considerable period of time. The small home-sparrows may be commonly witnessed in dwelling houses living in the happiness of family life. It is said therefore that man learnt to live in company of a single woman in imitation of birds and monkeys. Surely then in its crude unattractive form it may have come into existence much prior to the chalcolithic age and the rituals and sacraments may have grown round it as man evolved his religious tendencies, although it must be remembered that the primitive man was in no way less gifted in his love for rituals than his descendents. In fact the occult practices of some of the primitive tribes are an exceedingly interesting subject of study. So when marriage had already become an established custom during the second

Beginning

and third millennia before Christ its origin indeed in that case must be dated very much earlier It may have originated some time in the beginning of the chalcolithic age or even earlier It is natural therefore that the seers of the *Rgveda* should not refer to a condition of life when the custom of marriage had not yet taken a definite shape But the epic Purāṇas, as we shall see later do preserve such traditions—two have already been quoted above from the *Mahabharata*—as depict a society in which matrimony is not yet definitely established These traditions may have been current much earlier, and it is even possible that the Rgvedic seers may have known them but a reference to them would not be called for because of the nature of the work It is not that the *Rg veda* lacks in allusions to historical incidents as a matter of fact, it does refer to such events and we shall have occasions to discuss a few of them, but the point is that the want of a possible context may have been lacking and thus an omission may have been the result

However, the society of the *Rgveda* had advanced to a remarkable degree where marriage had already come to be regarded as an unavoidable social or even religious sacrament which every Ārya had to undergo The social and family ties of mother and father brother and sister son and daughter mother in law and father in law daughter in law and son in law, brothers in law uncle and nephew and other cognate and agnate relationships had grown up to such an admirable degree that marriage was bound to become the basis of a permanent and an unseverable union and a sought after necessity

Importance of Marriage

As it has already been mentioned above marriage was considred important due to several reasons The chief of these reasons was the Aryan occupation of India The enemies were far greater in number and the land was unknown The material prayer therefore arose May the husband be the eleventh male member

of the family, the rest ten being his sons.'[1] In Athens and Sparta, in the latter especially, in like manner free men were outnumbered by the slaves brought from distant conquered lands, and the result was woeful. Not only that the masters dwelling in perpetual awe had to live the life of an ever ready soldier but that corruption followed and the purity of blood of a free man began to be questioned. The Indo-Aryan was more concerned about preserving the purity of his blood and was wiser in handling his slaves. Every Ārya seems to have taken a vow to add at least ten men to the existing number of males in his tribe. This could be properly done through a permanent wife alone. Secondly, the zeal to preserve the purity of blood itself was a reason that favoured the institution of marriage where one woman was to associate and be intimate with one man alone. Thirdly, *in the religious belief where the worship of the manes is indispensable the need of a male child plays an important part and becomes imperative.* He was needed at the time when his father, the Ārya, worn out by perpetual strife and struggle, terminated his martial existence and lay still. He took from the hand of the dead hero the bow[2] and the quiver with the responsibilities and duties that their acceptance entailed on the new man. It was a queer legacy—not of wealth and riches and of consequent pleasure but of peril and war and of eventual hardship and pain. Lastly, the nomadic life being over, there arose the urge of a permanent abode and a settled home. A settled home was the necessary *outcome of a well administered household.* Here it was that the need of a *permanent companion asserted itself.* Here was felt the want of an imperious mistress who could command the household (*gārhapatyāya*)[3] including the bipeds and the quadrupeds[4] and who could be an empress (*samrājñī*) unto her

[1] दशास्यां पुत्राना धेहि पतिमेकादश कृधि ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 85, 45.

[2] धनुर्हस्तादाददानो मृतस्यास्मे क्षत्राय वर्चसे बलाय । ibid., X. 18, 9.

[3] ibid., 85, 27. 36.

[4] द्विपदे शं चतुष्पदे ibid., 85, 43. 44.

father-in-law and the sisters-in-law.[1] Here a real woman was the need who could throw in her lot unreservedly with her man and not one who would prove only a time-server and a possible deserter. Hence the marriage, which sought to fuse two hearts together by enjoining upon the couple the importance of perfect self-abnegation and which annihilated altogether the sense of individual aloofness through absolute self-surrender, was a socio-religious necessity.

Freedom of Marriage

It has been already pointed out that the maiden enjoyed considerable freedom the degree of which would become a matter of grave concern to the elders of the modern Hindu community. She was free to go about in the society and join in all social functions.[2] The *samanas*, to which a reference has been made above, attracted maidens of all ages. Here they moved in company of their lovers.[3] It was in fact a place where lovers met and it thus proved a tryst. Maidens flocked here in great numbers to find a husband.[4] Suitors wooed[5] their future wives on this spot and maidens approached it after properly decorating themselves with a view to marriage.[6] It is interesting to note that the *samana* was not an institution which had grown undesired and it was not the mere result of the free frolic of riotous youth but it had the support of the entire society and the elders never resented its existence although it must have aided the casual moral laxities in the community as such a free institution is bound to do. It proved to be a place where the difficulties of marriage were spontaneously removed. This lessened very much the worry of the parents about finding a match for the daughter as occasions multiplied in favour of the daughter

[1] सम्राज्ञी श्वशुरे भव सम्राज्ञी श्वश्र्वां भव ।
ननान्दरि सम्राज्ञी भव सम्राज्ञी अधि देवृषु ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 85, 46.

[2] ibid., IV. 58, 8; VI. 75, 4; VII. 2, 5; X. 86, 10.

[3] *AV.*, II. 36, 1; cf. *RV.*, VII. 2, 5; IV. 58, 8

[4] *ṚV.*, VII. 2, 5.

[5] ibid., IV. 58, 8; VII. 2, 5.

[6] ibid.

seeking her helpmate. The qualities and drawbacks were naturally adjusted for, men and women of different tastes[1] met here and very easily a shortcoming with one became an accomplishment with another. Therefore the attendance of maidens at the *samanas* was even encouraged by the elders of the family and we have a reference to the mothers decorating[2] their daughters for attending them with a view to matrimony. Kaegi evidently gives the picture of a lively *samana* when he says : "Wives and maidens attire themselves in gay robes and set forth to the joyous feast ; youths and girls hasten to the meadow when forest and field are clothed in fresh verdure, to take part in the dance. Cymbals sound, and seizing each other lads and damsels whirl about until the ground vibrates and clouds of dust envelop the gaily moving throng."[3] On such festal gatherings and similar other occasions, which were very frequent, there were often opportunities of forming acquaintance between young men and maidens which, when matured, resulted in wedlock.

In a society, such as the Ṛgvedic, marriage by free choice would without doubt be normal. Ordinarily the young maiden was free to choose the man with whom she should unite her lot. Yet her freedom was slightly qualified by parental advice. It was the duty of the father or, in his absence, of the brother, to assist the maiden to obtain a worthy husband. The brother, who was a great support of his sister as his name *bhrātṛ* would suggest, seems even to have had a little control over his sister's social habits and movements ; for, it is suggested in the *Ṛgveda*[4] that in his absence a sister was likely to go astray in her youth (*abhrātaro na yoṣaṇo vyantaḥ*) and so he had to be watchful

Its control

[1] Kālidāsa makes an interesting reference to the difference of tastes among men and women in matters of matrimony in his phrase भिन्न रुचिर्हि लोकः: *Raghu.*, vi. 30.

[2] सुसङ्काशा मातृमृष्टेव योषाविस्तन्वं कृणुषे दृशेकम् । *ṚV.*, I. 123, 11.

[3] *The Rigveda*, p. 19

[4] IV. 5, 5.

lest bad men should take advantage of his sister's weakness. In the absence of both the father and the brother the maiden had to be bold and to turn to men to seek out her husband[1] (*abhrāteva pumsa eti*). "She seeketh men," sings the seer, "as she who hath no brother mounting her car as't were to gather riches."[2]

It is, however, to be noted that in spite of all this freedom the sanction of the parents, if they were living, was almost imperative. It looks difficult to believe in the face of the extraordinary freedom enjoyed by women, but it is almost an established truth, that normally the father or brother sought out a suitable match for the girl. This custom to day has degenerated into a passive and indifferent interest on the part of the girl or boy in the event of her or his own marriage but in the freer atmosphere of the Rgvedic times it was a veritable blessing on the society, otherwise too free a choice of husband by a girl would have resulted in nothing else than a mere matchhunting. This may be witnessed as obtaining in consequence of such freedom in certain parts of the modern world where every couple starts anew and alone, although the way is too dark and difficult for individual experiments. The modern delusion of looking at marriage as an individual affair is, of course, the essence of the selfish, egocentric habit of life. It focuses desire on personal adventure and personal needs. With more courage to face the realities of love we should have a surer ideal. There should be less sentimentality but much deeper feeling about marriage. Kālidāsa, a later exponent of Indian culture following the earlier traditions of the Vedas, defines conjugal love as *bhava bandhana prema*,[3] love which springs up from a conscious, responsible feeling of affection and not from a selfish and sensuous appetite. "To leave men and women unguided," says Hartley, "with their own ideas of what is good to do and

[1] *RV* I 124 7

[2] अभ्रातेव पुंस एति प्रतीची गर्तारुगिव सनये धनानाम ।
जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासा उषा हस्रेव नि रिणीते अप्सः ॥ ibid

[3] *Raghu*, iii 24

what is evil, is the dry-rot very surely destroying the ideal of marriage....No longer must marriage be regarded solely as a personal relationship. Marriage is a religious duty." So was it with the Ṛgvedic Aryan. To him it was not a happiness in itself; it was a means to an end. He had an ideal, and man and woman both jointly walked up to that solemnly. Marriage was a discipline, it was not an adventure. This is why the hand of the father controlled the marriage of his daughter to some extent.

The Ṛgvedic Aryan knew well what would happen if inexperienced girls were left to seek out their match without restraint or guidance so he always strove to find out a suitable husband for his daughter. This truth has of late been realized by some modern thinkers of the west. An authoress of considerable repute suggests an injunction. She observes: "It would, I am certain, lessen the chance of endless unhappiness in marriage and prevent many divorces if some more fixed enquiries, within the case of any one (shall I say, under twenty-five) the consent of one parent of either party, if living, if not, that of a guardian were obligatory before the marriage could be entered into....If we desire really to preserve marriage let us treat it with seriousness. Marriage is not considered a vocation, it has become a game."

The idea embodied in the above quotation had found favour to a great extent in the Indo-Aryan community. We read of marriages being normally stopped where parents objected to them. When Śyāvāśva, the son of a priest, begs of King Rathavīti, son of Darbha, the hand of the princess, his daughter, the queen objects to the match as her ideal of a son-in-law is one who is a poet and the consent, therefore, is refused. Consequently the marriage is stopped[1] although both the lover and his fianceé, the princess, are eager for it. Again in the Gambler's hymn the greatest dread to the gambler is his mother-in-law[2].

[1] RV., V. 61; 52-61; 81-82; VIII. 35-38; IX. 32.

[2] द्वेष्टि श्वश्रूरप जाया रुणद्धि न नाथितो विन्दते मर्डितारम् । Ibid., X. 34, 3.

her or he who woos her?"[1] This situation when compared to its modern type will look remarkably humane. A blind bride to-day survives more by chance than care. What was true of women must have been to a great extent true of men as well. At least we have one instance in Śyāvāśva whose marriage had been stayed because of his poverty and lack of poetical genius.[2] Later as soon as he was able to procure wealth through his services to the princess Śaśīyasī and Purumiḷha, he married his lady-love.[3]

In Vimada's case also consent had been withheld which stopped the marriage as a result of which the lovers eloped.[4] But both these cases of Śyāvāśva and Vimada are those of the aristocracy. It is possible that the commoners were freer in this respect.

Marriageable Age

The marriageable age fell in the post-puberty period. It is significant that there is not a single reference to child marriage in the whole of the *Ṛk Saṁhitā*. The maiden was more than conscious of the love she was making and the bride was perfectly aware of the rituals she was a witness to. As we shall see below her assent to several features of the marriage ceremony was obligatory. The marriage hymn[5] of Sūryā contains several references which show that the bride at the time of her marriage was quite grown up and fit for consummation and procreation.[6] In fact consummation was an essential part of protracted Vedic marriage ritual.[7] The rituals themselves supposed the bride to be a grown up woman.[8]

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[1] यस्यानक्षा दुहिता जात्वास कस्तां विद्वाँ अभि मन्याते अन्धाम् ।
कतरो मेनिं प्रति तं मुचाते य ईं वहाते य ईं वा वरेयात् ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 27, 11.

[2] ibid., V. 61; 52-61; 81-82; VIII. 35-38; IX. 32.

[3] ibid., I. 117, 8.

[4] ibid., I. 112, 19; 116, 1; 117, 20; X. 39, 7; 65, 12.

[5] ibid., X. 85.

[6] ibid., 25; 41; 42, 43; 45; 46.

[7] ibid., X. 85.

[8] ibid., VII. 55, 8.

Then we find that words used to denote women, most of which refer to unmarried maidens, signify their mature, youthful age Thus the word *kanyā*,[1] with its several other derivations *kanā*,[2] *kanīnakā*[3] and *kanyanā*,[4] means a woman, maiden and young *Yuvatī*,[5] developed enough and fit to unite with a lover[6] (*marya*), is likewise a youthful maiden The words *Yoṣā*,[7] *Yoṣan*,[8] *Yoṣana*[9] and *Yoṣit*[10] imply the sense of a young woman ripe for marriage [11] We have already given a number of references to freedom of love and marriage, to the attendance at festivals and *samanas* and to meetings of lovers at trysts [12] An allusion has also been made to fatherless and brotherless girls boldly stepping out in quest of a suitable husband Such a state of things could be possible only when post-puberty marriages were a rule Of an exception to the contrary we have not a solitary record

There is another line of reasoning which will prove marriage to have been performed of mature girls alone and of no others Mention is made of the rite of Viśvāvasu in the verses of the *Ṛgveda* [13] Gandharva Viśvāvasu has been explained in later Sanskrit literature as a rod placed on the bed by the side of the bride to act as a witness of the couple s abstinence from union When, at last, the first four days following the marriage ceremony were over, the husband prepared himself for the

[1] *RV*, I 123, 10 161, 5 III 23 10

[2] ibid, X 61, 5

[3] ibid, IV 32 23, X 40 9

[4] ibid VIII 35 5

[5] ibid I 118, 5, II 35, 4, III 54 14 IV 18 8 V 2 1 2, IX 86, 16, X 30 5

[6] ibid, III 31, 7 33, 10, IV 20 5 IX 96, 20

[7] ibid, I 117, 20

[8] IV 5, 5

[9] ibid, III 52, 3, 56, 5, 62, 8, VII 95, 3.

[10] ibid, IX 28 4

[11] *ibid*, I 48, 5 92, 11, III 33, 10 38, 8

[12] ibid, X 34 5, cf ibid, 40 6

[13] ibid, X 85, 21 22

consummation of marriage. To Viśvāvasu he addressed the following lines placing his foot on the bed:

"Rise up from hence; this maiden hath a husband. I applaud Viśvāvasu with hymns and homage. Seek in her father's home another fair one (*anyamiccha*), and find the portion from of old assigned thee.[1]

"Rise up from hence, Viśvāvasu; with reverence we worship thee. Seek thou another willing maid and with her husband leave the bride."[2]

These verses occurring in course of a marriage hymn evidently prove the consummation of marriage just after the conclusion of the marital ritual which could have been possible only when the bride was mature for it. Then we have to bear in mind that Viśvāvasu was the fourth deity to whom the bride was supposed to be ideally wedded before the actual marriage took place. Before him three guardian deities of maturity held sway over her body. These were Varuṇa, Soma, and Agni in order of precedence. Varuṇa, the king of the natural order, made her inviolable; Soma infused her with the *rasa*, the natural flow of the sexual secretion; and Agni animated her for the act of procreation. Varuṇa represents the stage anterior to the visible signs of maturity and he is expected to keep watch over the maiden until she shows signs of womanhood. Just at this stage her charge passes from Varuṇa to Soma. Soma signifies a liquid flow and thus implies the menstrual flow of the girl. It is now that a change comes over the girl and she is fast changing to womanhood. Yet an urge to cohabit with man does not quite start as menstruation begins. It takes a little time. This interval is the charge of Agni who gives warmth to the body. It hatches in the adolescent woman the madness of love and gives fullness to her limbs and lustre

[1] उदीर्ष्वातः पतिवती ह्येषा विश्वावसुं नमसा गीर्भिरीळे ।
अन्यामिच्छ पितृषदं व्यक्तां स ते भागो जनुषा तस्य विद्धि ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 85, 21.

[2] उदीर्ष्वातो विश्वावसो नमसेळामहे त्वा ।
अन्यामिच्छ प्रफर्व्यं सञ्जायां पत्यासृज ॥ *ibid.*, 22.

to her body, animates her and generates in her the wild urge to mate which, when resisted and stayed, results in an elopement of Kamadyu and Vimada.[1]

Thus when Agni had made the bride strong enough to conceive, Viśvāvasu, the presiding deity of conjugal arts and accomplishments, yielded to the temporal god, the husband, who had to begin the solemn and sacred act of procreation which was so very essential for the propagation of his race and for appeasing the thirst and hunger of the manes It was a time when multiplication of the race was a dire need and when the newly wedded husband hoped that his wife would soon become a mother of ten mighty children[2] It was a time when 'lack of sons was considered a misfortune and adoption only a makeshift.' Viśvāvasu thus took charge of the maiden when all physical signs of maturity including puberty were *distinctly developed in her. This makes it sufficiently clear* that the bride at the time of her marriage was in a full-grown state *fit to give birth to children and not a plaything* She was—if we are very punctilious about knowing her age in years—at least sixteen years old. Just after her marriage she drove with her husband and took command of her new household which teemed with life of both 'bipeds and quadrupeds'[3] It is inconceivable otherwise how she could become an empress, *samrājñī*, 'unto her father in law and mother-in-law and unto her sister in-law and brother in law'[4]

Old age Marriages and Sexual Invalids

Grown up marriage was the order of the day We read of old-age marriages[5] and of unmarried women growing old[6] in their fathers' house Kakṣīvān, a great sage of the *Ṛgveda*, married Romaśā, the grand

[1] *RV*, I 112, 19, 116, 1, 117, 20, X 39, 7, 65, 12

[2] ibid, X 85, 44 45

[3] द्विपदे श चतुष्पदे ibid, 43 44

[4] ibid, 46

[5] ibid, I 51, 13, 117, 7, II 17, 7, X 39, 9, 40, 5

[6] ibid, I 117, 7; II 17, 7, X 39, 3, 40, 5

daughter of king Bhāvya.[1] In his old age he married another princess Ghoṣā, herself an old woman.[2] Such old-age marriages in certain cases resulted in the invalidity of the husband and the unproductivity of the wife. We read of childless weaklings[3] being helped with children by the Aśvins. "Ye came unto the calling of the weakling's dame (*vadhramatyā*)," prays Kakṣīvān, "and granted noble offspring to the happy wife."[4] Ghoṣā, his wife, in like manner chants her prayer: "With liberal bounty to the weakling's consort, ye heroes, gave a son Hiraṇyahasta."[5] But such cases were certainly few in the society as marriages were generally contracted when both the bride and the bridegroom were in a completely developed and youthful state. It is possible that in cases of polygamous husbands such circumstances took rise. Kakṣīvān himself in his young age had already been married to the grand-daughter of king Bhāvya while Ghoṣā, his second wife, had to stay unmarried until old age because of her skin disease, which when cured, she was taken in as a wife.

Marriage in order of Age

In a society where free love and free choice of the husband was normal, the idea of *parivettā*, i.e. marrying in order of seniority in age, of the later literature[6] could not have found favour with people. It is natural that when several youthful sisters visited the *samanas* or such other festivals with a view to matrimony and when the youngers were able to attract attention of young men and marry them, the elder ones should suffer the undeserved humility of staying unmarried at their fathers' house and there growing old. We have no conclusive evidence in the *Ṛgveda* on the point but relying on the testimony of the

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[1] *ṚV.*, I. 51, 13.

[2] ibid., I. 117, 7; II. 17, 7; X. 39, 3; 40, 5.

[3] ibid., X. 39, 7; I. 117, 24.

[4] ibid., X. 39, 7.

[5] हिरण्यहस्तमश्विना रराणा पुत्रं नरा वध्रिमत्या अदत्तम् । ibid., I. 117, 24.

[6] *Vās. Dh. Sūt.*, XX. 7ff. (cf. *Vāja. Saṁ.*, XXX. 9); cf. also *Taitt. Saṁ.*, III. 2, 4, 4; *Kāt. Śr. Sūt.* II. 1, 22, *Kauś. Sūt.*, 8, 5; 137, 37.

later *Samhitas, Brahmanas* and the *Sūtra* literature Prof Sarkār thinks that "in spite of some amount of social feeling against breaking the order of seniority in matrimony, younger sisters were not wanting who were anxious to woo before their elder sisters, and found husdands brave enough to face denunciations or opprobrious epithets —Vedic society thus appears to have taken it for granted that the woman had her likes and dislikes, her loves and joys, as much as the man This personal freedom of action of the unmarried woman develops into a dignified wifehood after her marriage'[1] This state of society could not possibly stick to a particular marital code of law In later times the custom of marrying in order of age developed because child marriage came in vogue and it fell wholly to the parents to seek out suitable husbands for their daughters It was different *in the society of the Rgveda*

There is no doubt about the fact that although the caste system in its present form had not been evolved nevertheless its *beginnings were already marked in the Rgveda* At least the Brāhmana and the Rājanya classes had been formed and the common people were called the Viśa from which

Intermarriage

the Vaisyas of later times derived their name The Brahmanas had already developed into a conspicuous class specializing mainly in the priestly vocation *It is they who form the greater number of the* Rgvedic seers In the marriage of Sūryā occurring in the comparatively later portion—the tenth book—of the *Rgveda* they are given largesses by the bride[2]

But although the *Rgveda Samhita* warrants the commencement of the caste system its evidence clearly points out that the habits and customs which later on grew as peculiar traits to the distinct classes had not yet acquired their rigidity There was no ban put, *for example, on interdining and inter* marrying Intermarriages, of courses lingered in a weak form

[1] *Soc His of India* pp 108 9

[2] परा देहि शामुल्यं ब्रह्मभ्यो वि भजा वसु । *RV* X 85 29

till quite late in the classical period. During the Ṛgvedic age the occurrence of such marriages was very frequent. We glean a few instances of intermarriage from the *Ṛgveda* where the exigency and the context permit the poet to dwell upon, or refer to such matrimonial connections. This form of marriage was so common that it never struck a dissentient note among the people. It is but natural that such intermarriages should frequently occur as a result of the freedom that the maidens and young men enjoyed in making love and maturing it into a happy wedlock.

In the *Ṛgveda* there is absolutely no restriction about intermarriages among the Aryans. We have no conclusive evidence in this *Saṁhitā* whether there was any definite control over the forms of marriage which later on came to be called *Anuloma*, a man of higher caste marrying a woman of a lower one, and *Pratiloma*, a woman of higher class taking for her husdand a man from a lower one. In fact the case for such a distinction was definitely lacking. And we have evidence showing the existence of both in the society although the latter form may not have been frequently obtaining. But the growing importance of the Brāhmaṇas as an exclusive class was sure to usher in the *Anuloma* form of marriage. Of this we have several instances in the *Ṛgveda* itself. The marriages of Cyavāna,[1] Śyāvāśva,[2] Kakṣīvān[3] and Vimada[4] refer to the *Anuloma* form of intermarriage. All these Brāhmaṇa ṛṣis and sons of ṛṣis married in the Rājanya families. Of these the last three deserve to be treated in a little detail.

The most interesting episode is that of Śyāvāśva. Śyāvāśva was the son of a prominent priest attached to the court of king Rathavīti, son of Darbha. There were occasions on festivals

[1] Cyavāna's name occurs in several verses: *ṚV.*, I. 116, 10; 117, 18; 118, 6; V. 74, 5; VII. 68, 6; 71, 5; X. 39, 4.

[2] ibid., V. 61; 52-61; 81-82; VIII. 35-38; IX. 32. cf. *Bṛhadd.*, V. 49ff.

[3] ibid., I. 126, 3; 51, 13.

[4] ibid., I. 112, 19; 116, 1; 117, 20; X. 39, 7; 65, 12.

and sacrifices when Śyāvāśva and the daughter of Rathaviti saw and met each other They were attracted to each other and free love developed between them Śyāvāśva had a tender heart and therefore suffered subjectively more than his fiancée Then in order to make the princess his wife he approached the king and begged of him her hand in marriage The father was quite willing but the mother felt more concerned about her daughter for she had strong misgivings as to the accomplishments of the young man Besides, the queen knew that Śyāvāśva was too poor to provide her daughter with her lordly requirements Then again, her ideal of a son in law had been a rich young man endowed with the genius of a poet The queen therefore naturally thinking the wooer of her daughter to be falling too short of her expectations refused to give her permission to the marriage and the negotiations fell through

Śyavāśva

The striking beauty and grace of the princess had struck too deep a root in the heart of Śyāvāśva to make him forget her and to let the affair alone Love caused him to suffer greatly He gained one thing from his pleasant pain He began to muse His heart was tender and his mood reflective His silent ponderings over his love and beauty of the princess gave him the eloquent ideas with which his tender heart and susceptible mind helped to turn out touching and sweet images of poetry He soon developed into a master poet He sang eloquently and the sad story of his rejected love which his composition embodied filled the air and echoed through the valleys His fame as a poet spread far and wide

There was a like sufferer in love It was the princess Śaśīyasī Her position had naturally gained her a throng of admirers She had rejected all of them But later her choice fell on a handsome Rājanya prince The son of king Purumīḷha she thought could eligibly aspire for her hand, and she selected him But it seems there arose some difficulty in the realization of her objective perhaps the prince did not know

that she loved him; perhaps he would not consent to the wedding. The princess began to suffer from the pangs of love and while yet suffering she heard of the painful story of Śyāvāśva. The fame of the latter as a poet and the nature of his malady won the sympathy of Śaśīyasī, who considered him withal an apt spokesman of hearts agonized by love. She sent for him while he was yet suffering from the refusal of the queen. The princess opened to the poet the secret of her heart and entrusted him with the mission of carrying her love-message to the son of Purumiḷha. No other person was better fitted for the mission than Śyāvāśva. He was smitten by the same ailment from which Śaśīyasī suffered and he could well imagine the sorry state of her feelings. He agreed to go on the errand and proceeded to win for Śaśīyasī the man after her heart. He was a poet and in love. He brought his negotiations to a successful close which resulted in the marriage of Śaśīyasī and the son of Purumiḷha. The newly married couple were "lavish in their benefactions towards the ambassador"[1] and they gave him 'droves of cows and horses'[2] and hundreds of chariots.[3]

Śyāvāśva had already become a poet and his gain of wealth through Śaśīyasī had completed his need regarding the conditions which the queen had put for her daughter's hand. The grateful poet "extolled in magnificent language the princess' liberality and the support that her husband would find in her firmness of character."

"Śaśīyasī has given me droves of cows and horses," sang he "together with a hundred chariots. For the husband recommended by Śyāvāśva, she has become a strong and powerful support.[4]

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[1] Clarisse Bader: *Women in Ancient India*, p. 25.

[2] यो मे धेनूनां शतं वैदृदश्विर्यथाददत् । *ṚV.*, V. 61, 10.

[3] ibid.

[4] सनत्साश्व्यं पशुमुत गव्यं शतावयम् ।
श्यावाश्वस्तुताय या दोर्वीरायोपबर्बृहत् ॥ *ibid.*, 61, 5.

"Differing from other women, Śaśīyasī has proved herself more generous than a man who no longer honours the gods and who is greedy for gain.[1]

"Amongst the Devas, she seeks him who may be fatigued, oppressed by thirst or want, and it is upon him she directs her thoughts."[2]

This was indeed a sad reflection upon his poor disappointed, rejected self. He was singing the glory of one who had succeeded in her love and in gaining the object of her desire, while he, the man who had brought about her happiness was himself pining for the attainment of his objective! The thought embodied in his song reacted, and the voice of the poet rang out in the hush of night and rent the air:

"O Night, carry my hymn to the son of Darbha. O Goddess become the chariot of my prayer.[3]

"Speak of me to Rathavīti at the moment of pouring out the libation. Tell him that my love for his daughter is not extinguished."[4]

These lines were the procurser of the later *Meghaduta* and of many other works that followed it. The first impassioned Yakṣa attuned these in the stillness of night and then he begged the Night itself to convey them to the separated beloved and her people. And they were heard. For we read in later literature[5] that Śyavaśva married the princess whose hand he had sought for. The story of Śyavaśva is a clear and conclusive proof of intermarriage between a Brahmana and a Ksatriyā. It also incidentally serves as a case in point for the *Anuloma* marriage as in it a Brāhmana youth marries a Rajanya maiden. There are at least ten hymns attributed to the

[1] उतत्वा स्त्री शशीयसी पुंसो भवति वस्यसी । अदेवत्रादराधस ॥ *RV* V 61 6

[2] विया जानाति जसुरिं वि तृष्यन्तं वि कामिनम । देवत्रा कृणुते मन ॥ ibid 7

[3] एत मे स्तोममूर्म्ये दार्भ्याय परा वह । गिरो देवि रथीरिव ॥ ibid 17

[4] उत मे वोचतादिति सुतसोमे रथवीतौ । न कामो अप वेति मे ॥ ibid 18

[5] *Brhadd*, V 41 ff

authorship of Śyāvāśva while his name occurs many a time elsewhere. Naturally his story had become dear to the people and so it found mention at several places. We shall now pass on to the stories of Kakṣīvān and Vimada.

Kakṣīvān, a great sage of the time and one of the authors of the *Ṛgveda*, was polygamous. He married first Romaśā, the grand-daughter of king Bhāvya[1], and then Ghoṣā, both Rājanya princesses. Kakṣīvān was returning to his family after the completion of his studies. Fatigued by his long journey he lay down to rest by the roadside under the luxuriant shade of the forest trees and fell fast asleep. Prince Svanaya, the son of king Bhāvya, came driving in his chariot in the meantime and saw the tired Brahmacārī sleeping on the ground. He woke him up and invited him to his chariot. The learning of Kakṣīvān had already gained some fame and his talented talks soon won the admiration of the Rājanya prince. He had a charming daughter, Romaśā by name, whose marriage he proposed to the young graduate, who at once accepted the enviable offer. Kakṣīvān, instead of returning directly to his parents, drove to the palace of king Bhāvya, who married his grand-daughter to him and offered him, besides, gold, slave girls, droves of cattle, chariots and horses. Followed by numerous escort and accompanied by his wife, Kakṣīvān reached his father's house and there he related to his family the joys and triumphs of his journey, the munificence of prince Svanaya and the romantic circumstances in which he had married his bride. Then his wife, the young princess Romaśā, timidly advanced in her turn to her father-in-law and identifying herself with the family addressed him with much familiarity:

Kakṣīvān

"He has accepted me as his wife and I cling to him like the rider to the whip which he grips in his hand. My husband grants me the enjoyment of a thousand precious gifts.[2]

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[1] *ṚV.*, I. 126.

[2] ibid., 8-6.

"Suffer me to approach you Have pity on my weakness I shall be always Romaśā, that is to say, the ewe of the Gandhāras '[1]

Later on Kakṣivān married another wife She again was a Rājanya princess (*rajñaduhita*)[2] who naturally had for her ideal of a husband 'a car borne chieftain rich in steeds [3] But unfortunately her desire remained unrealized as she fell a victim to a skin disease, perhaps leprosy, which, in those days of direct choice of a husband, proved an unsurmountable impediment to her marriage So in the house of her father she lay growing old and praying to the Aśvins to cure her of her disease and to find her a husband The heavenly physicians took pity on her condition—'maiden yet stricken in years — cured her of her leprosy and found her a husband Kakṣivān married her in his old age[4], and thus the like wedded the like

Vimada, again a Ṛṣi, married Śughnyu, otherwise called Kamadyu, who was a Rājanya princess, daughter of king Purumiḷha and perhaps the sister in law of Śaśiyasi for whom Śyāvāśva had striven and found a husband in the son of the king named above Vimada and Kamadyu loved each other and the former with a view to making the latter his *legally wedded wife* asked the permission of her father, the king, to their marriage But the king seems to have had an imperious temper and his aristocratic consciousness revolted against the idea of a moneyless man marrying his daughter He therefore refused to give his consent The couple, however, had gone too long a way in their love to retrace their steps They were very unlike Śyāvaśva and his fiancée and refused to suffer in silence like them They resolved to become husband and wife, and taking

Vimada

[1] उपोप मे परा मृशमा मे दभ्राणि मन्यथा ।
सर्वाहमस्मि रोमशा गन्धारीणामिवाविका ॥ *RV* I 126 7

[2] ibid X 40 5

[3] भूतं मे अह्ने उत भूतमक्तवेऽश्वावते रथिने शक्तमर्वते । ibid

[4] ibid , X 40

a daring step, eloped together to an unknown destination. The parents considering it foolish to stand in their way eventually agreed to their marriage and even commended their conduct. References to the incident are made in several passages of the *Ṛgveda*.[1]

In later works the *Anuloma* form has found a frequent mention and Prof. Sarkar instances several cases to show that this form of marriage was quite common. "The Atharvaveda," he observes, "glorifies the brāhmaṇa as the best husband for women of all other 'varṇas,'[2] though from the same context it transpires that the 'brāhmaṇī' often held opposite views, and had to be reclaimed from persons of other 'varṇas' with the help of the king's justice. 'Vaiśī-putra's are known to the early Brāhmaṇas;[3] in the Yv. Ārya-Śūdrā connexions are subjects of jest amongst court and priestly circles,[4] so that legal marriage between such must have been frequent..."[5]

In like manner the *Pratiloma* form of marriage had also found sanction in the Ṛgvedic society to which several allusions are made in the *Saṁhitā*. Śaśvatī,[6] the daughter of the sage Aṅgiras was married to king Asaṅga. King Svanaya Bhāvayavya, the son of Bhāvya and the brother of Romaśā the wife of sage Kakṣīvān, was wedded to a Brāhmaṇī wife descended from the family of Aṅgiras.[7] The name of Yayāti[8] may also be added to the list. He married Devayānī, the daughter of the sage Śukrācārya. The story of his marriage with the daughter of the Ṛsi is narrated in the *Purāṇas* while the names of both the son-in-law and the father-in-law occur in the *Ṛgveda* itself.

[1] *ṚV.*, I. 112, 19 ; 116, 1 ; 117, 20 ; X. 39, 7 ; 65, 12.
[2] *AV.*, V. 17, 8. 9.
[3] *Taitt., Brā.*, III. 9, 7, 3 ; *Śat., Brā.*, XIII. 2.
[4] *Vāja. Saṁ.*, XXIII. 30-31 ; *Taitt. Saṁ.*, VII. 4, 19, 2-3.
[5] *Some Asps. of the Soc. His. of Ind.*, p. 102.
[6] *ṚV.*, VIII. 1, 34.
[7] ibid., I. 126
[8] ibid., X. 63, 1.

Thus it can be asserted with ample force that intermarriage among the *varṇas* was not considered bad and was a common feature of the day. And it may be shown with sufficient clearness that it obtained not only between the Aryan *varṇas* but also between the Aryans and the conquered natives, Dāsas, the slaves. The *condition of the society consequent upon* conquest made it almost a custom for a man to bring along with his wife 'marriageable' slave girls.[1] We read frequently of ṛṣis being presented with female slaves[2] by princes who must have at occasions furnished their Aryan masters with wives from amongst them. Female slaves have been even called *vadhūs*,[3] legally marriageable brides. Many important Ṛgvedic Aryans were sons of slave mothers.[4] Kakṣīvan, the celebrated seer and the son-in-law of two princes, Svanaya Bhāvayavya and the father of Ghoṣā, was himself born of a female slave.[5] So also were Auśija, Kavaṣa or Vatsa sons of slave mothers[6] (*dāsī* or *Śūdrā*). It is very natural that in most cases where chances of a legal wedding were remote the slave girls might have served well as concubines. *Prof.* Sarkar *remarks* very judiciously: "The use of the term 'dāsī,' as compared with that of 'dāsa,' in Vedic texts, shows that the 'dāsī' very early came into contact with Aryan masters, as a result probably of the extermination and subjugation of aboriginal tribesmen; accordingly, 'dāsī-putra's became quite common, and slave-girls presented to priests by conquerors could be called 'vadhu's or 'wedable' women."[7]

Intermarriage is the outcome of both a circumstantial need and a choice. Conditions for both were present in the Ṛgvedic society. Free love and free choice of a partner in life

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[1] *RV.*, VIII. 19, 36; 68, 17; VI. 27, 8.

[2] ibid.

[3] ibid., VI. 27, 8; VIII. 19, 36; 68, 17.

[4] ibid., I. 18, 1, 112, 1.

[5] ibid.

[6] ibid.

[7] *Some Asps. of the Soc. His. of Ind*, p. 102

as well as free mixing of the sexes are bound to result in intermarriages. Love is seldom the result of calculation and it always acts with the swiftness of an avalanche on young people. The existence of young slave girls, besides the wife, in the Aryan home was sure to attract the notice of the Aryan master and it is no wonder that the latter occasionally lapsed into the laxities of the age. The *Yajur Veda*[1] alludes even to Śūdra-Ārya connections and the *Atharva Veda*[2] contains a charm directed against the wife's paramour, who is a slave 'winning her love by sheer physical strength.' The *Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra*[3] refers to the ancient tradition that 'the family slave (*dāsa*) could lawfully marry the widow of his master.' Thus we see that in spite of his best endeavours the Ṛgvedic Aryan was not always able to keep his blood pure. It was the need of the time, the pressure of circumstances, which outwitted him and over which he had no control.

The society had come to acquire varied needs. Marriage among the Hindus to-day has become stereotyped, formalized and fixed in all details. It has come to have a single form and naturally therefore all the different types of it mentioned and detailed in the *Smṛtis* have become superficial and obsolete. Surely the society of the *Ṛgveda* and that of slightly later times had served as the earlier and later models for the *Smṛtis*. The eight forms of marriage of which we read in them were certainly current at some time or other in the Aryan society and they may have been features of the institution of marriage in the *Ṛgveda* itself, although we do not find all of them referred to in the *Saṁhitā*. The omission of an allusion to all of them may have been due to the restricted subject matter of the work. The *Ṛgveda* is, in the first instance, a work of rituals and of philosophy in embriyo and references to mundane affairs can not but be scarce, only few and far between. Nevertheless, most of the later forms have found a mention either directly

[1] *Vāj. Saṁ.*, XXIII. 30-31; *Taitt. Saṁ.*, VII. 4, 19, 2-3.
[2] *Some Asps. of the Soc. His. of Ind.*, p. 102.
[3] IV. 2, 18.

or indirectly They are the following, viz (1) Āsura Brāhma, (2) Prājāpatya, (3) Svayamvara, (4) Gāndharva, (5) Rakṣasa and (6) Contractual The terms quoted above are not of the *Ṛgveda* but of the *Manusmṛti* and other *Smṛtis* The *Saṃhita* does not specifically refer to them by name and it is doubtful if the actual names of these technical catagories had been evolved by the time when these hymns were composed But the circumstances and the nature of the matrimonial connections referred to in the *Saṃhita* are such as may easily and conveniently be classed under one or the other of the forms enumerated above

Kinds of Marriage

Thus, to begin with, we have two references to the bride money being payed by the bridegroom and accepted by the bride s father [1] It seems that when a suitor was desertless (*viyamaluh*) and bereft of accomplishments he was obliged to win the consent of his future father in law by pleasing him with liberal gifts The text of the *Rgveda* clearly reads ' For I have heard that ye gave wealth more freely than worthless son in law or spouse s brother [2] It is yet very doubtful if this can be definitely termed as purchase money It will be seen later on that dowry was generally given by the father and the brother to the bridegroom along with the bride though no sweeping assertion can be made against the possibility of the existence of the custom of purchase of bride The usual gift seems to have been a pair of oxen the great necessary of agricultural life of the early Aryan The case in point may not be altogether isolated and singular, and such marriages may have been more frequent than actually evidenced inasmuch as there the status enjoyed by the woman was one of privilege and it is possible that a worthless man—in those days of marriage by the free choice of the maiden and in the absence of a compelling control on her will—may have found it easier to influence

Āsura Brāhma

[1] अश्रव हि भूरिदावत्तरा वा विजामातुरुत वा घा स्यालात् । *RV* I 109 2 also ibid VIII 2 20

[2] ibid I 109 2

the nearest relations of the bride by handsome presents than to venture on the doubtful result of open wooing.

And if we bring history to our aid we shall find that India has been seldom free from the existence of such an evil as this side by side with the ideal sacrifice implied in the Prājāpatya form of wedding. Kālidāsa mentions the possibility of such an incident as the existence of marriage through payment (*duhitṛ śulka saṁsthayā*).[1] We find that the custom to a considerable extent endures till now and many cases of the type are being registered everyday by institutions working in the society to erradicate the unwanted evil. Very commonly is being disclosed the working of secret gangs employed in stealing or purchasing and selling away brides in Bengal, Bihar, the United Provinces and the Punjab. Therefore the existence of such a custom would not have been altogether impossible, although, it may be asserted that it militates against the ideal of free love which was a strong condition of marriage—of which we shall have occasion to treat below—particularly when the father left almost a free hand to his daughter in matters of the choice of her husband. The evidence on the point is rather meagre and inconclusive and the one we have in view itself contains a reference to dowry paid by the brother of the bride to the groom. This form of marriage, however, would be covered under the term Āsura-Brāhma. In the Āsura form of marriage payment of some consideration to the relatives and father of the bride with a view to marrying the bride is imperative. This form of marriage differs from the Brāhma form inasmuch as consideration plays an essential part in it while in the Brāhma it does not.

Prājāpatya

The Prājāpatya form of marriage seems to have been most normally obtaining in the society. In this form the father of the bride adorned his daughter with ornaments and gave her away to the bridegroom after the completion of the necessary ceremonies. These rites mark the beginnings, in howsoever crude a form, of those

[1] *Raghu.*, xi. 38.

that were perfectly systematized in the *Smrtis, Sūtras* and *Vivāhapaddhatis* (manuals of marriage rituals) The Prājāpatya was considered, as now, the ideal form of marriage and the Rgvedic seer could not conceive of a better and more sacred form with which to bind the typical Aryan wife Sūryā with her lord Soma[1] It is almost the only form of marriage now permitted by law and prevailing in the Hindu community Its incidents are the same as those that featured in the wedding of the first known pair in literature The marriage of Suryā may have been an outcome of an earlier Svayamvara to which we find allusions in the very hymn which consecrates it but the fact remains that the legal sanction resulted only after the performance of the nuptial ceremony incidental to the Prājāpatya form The incidents we shall describe later in certain detail Here is a system in the history of human marriage which purports to make the nuptial union permanent and its ceremonies the sacramental basis of such union The system must have taken a considerably long time to evolve It has none of the patriarchal traits of marriages elsewhere It has its base in the sacrifice of the parents and in no consideration of value This leads us naturally to the system of dowry

Dowry

Dowry in whatever form is its necessary incident and essential feature Unfortunately the system to day has taken an oppressive turn inasmuch as it puts a price on the head of a prospective bridegroom but so long as it forms part of the great gift—*dana*—it is undoubtedly a glowing emolument of the Prajapatya form of marriage Later authors of the manuals of Hindu marriage and of other cultural documents and literature call the giving away of the daughter a great gift *kanyadana* It is inconceivable how far the marriage can be called a *kanya dāna* in which the bride would form an article of sale The Prājāpatya form of marriage, which makes the gift of daughter almost conditional on providing her person with such

[1] *ṚV*, X 85

ornaments and robes as the father or the brother easily can, was indeed a high ideal attained by the Ṛgvedic Aryan. Later the system degenerated which to-day means so much oppression to the parents of an adolescent daughter. Still the ideal is so dear that they bravely suffer it. Even now it is seldom that the Hindu parents or other elderly kinsmen of the bride eat at her expense and enjoy anything which would be of any material value to her; and cases there have been when punctilious parents have refused even to look at the house of their daughter for fear of enjoying that which is their daughter's property. The bride's parents or those in *loco parentis* still do not accept any invitation to meals at the bride's house. This may be an absurd extreme but it does, for the matter of that, point to a determined attitude to spare and protect the ideal.

In the Ṛgvedic society, not only the young girl was not sold to her betrothed, but she was, as mentioned above, even dowered by her father and brother. We know it for certain that the system of dowry was an exceptionally rare event in antiquity. The purchase of bride was the normal custom in other cultures and therefore the existence of the system of dowry among the Aryans eloquently proves that they realized the moral value of their women and the dignity of marriage. They did not consider their women as chattels for sale but as possessors of souls who could give themselves away. We learn from the incident of Kakṣivān's marriage *that the bridegroom received besides his wife, gold, numerous* flocks of cattle, chariots and horses.[1] The brother of the bride has been especially mentioned as giving away riches as dowry to his brother-in-law.[2] The prospects of a rich dowry or the wealth that the bride would or did receive from her ancestral property made it naturally so easy to find a good husband.[3] The verse says: "How many a maid is pleasing to the suitor

[1] RV., I. 126, 1-3.

[2] ibid., I. 109, 2; also cf. VI. 28, 5; X. 27, 12; 85, 6.

[3] ibid., X. 27, 12.

who fain would marry for her splendid riches? If the girl be both good and fair of feature, she finds, herself, a friend among the people'[1] Again we read of 'treasury' (*kosa*) being sent along with the bride to the home of her husband "Thought was the pillow of her couch, sight was the unguent for her eyes Her *treasury* was earth and heaven when Sūryā went unto her lord'[2] This verse would also suggest that besides other valuable treasures, the dowry of the bride consisted of articles of toilet (*caksurā abhyañjanam*)[3] and other everyday necessities like a couch and bed pillow (*upabarhanam*)[4] It may be noted that these articles even now form part of the bride's dower The preceding verse[5] refers to *anudeyi*, the giver, possibly the father or the brother The slave girls, who very often were given away along with the bride to the groom, may have, in the first instance, accompanied her as her personal maid-servants and thus formed part of her dowry These items of the bride's possession which figured as the dowry undoubtedly formed her personal property, her *strīdhana* of later legal literature

Whatever the form of marriage through which the couple desired to unite, one thing was obligatory, except perhaps in the Gāndharva form it was the performance of the nuptial sacraments of the Prājāpatya form at the time of marriage This, however, would not have been binding in cases of Gāndharva marriage in which secrecy must have been of the essence and in which even elopement was an incident at times We shall deal with the rituals and other features of the Prājāpatya form when treating of marriage proper

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[1] कियती योषा मर्यतो वधूयो परिप्रीता पन्यसा वार्येण ।
भद्रा वधूर्भवति यत्सुपेशा स्वयं सा मित्रं वनुते जने चित् ॥ *RV*, X 27, 12

[2] चित्तिरा उपबर्हणं चक्षुरा अभ्यञ्जनम् ।
द्यौर्भूमिः कोश आसीद्यदयात्सूर्या पतिम् ॥ ibid, 85 7

[3] ibid

[4] ibid

[5] ibid, 6

The epic system of Svayamvara seems to have germinated in the Ṛgvedic period. Svayamvara is the self-choice of a husband by the bride out of her many suitors. When too many gods aspired for the hand of fair Sūryā, Savitā, her father, arranged for a Svayamvara fixing a goal which the winner of the bride must reach first of all. The assembled divine suitors assented to the stipulation and in the race that followed the Aśvins were victorious thus winning the bride in full glory.[1] In another verse also the same sort of choice is evidenced, as for example:

Svayamvara

"Then she who came for friendship (i.e. seeking for a husband), maid of noble birth, elected you as husbands, you as her lords."[2]

Gāndharva marriage has not been specifically mentioned but its existence may be easily imagined from the free life in the society and from the free love-making. We read in the *Ṛgveda* of young unmarried women meeting their lovers at trysts[3] and inviting them in their own chambers at the dead of night.[4] Its comparatively clear evidence may be found in the love of Vimada, a Brahmin Ṛṣi, and Kamadyu,[5] a Rājanya princess, which, since it led to an elopement, must have resulted in a Gāndharva wedlock. This form of marriage was entirely an affair of love which consummated in a union without the proposal of marriage. It proceeded entirely from free love and mutual inclination of a youth and a maiden, and was concluded with the mutual consent and agreement of the couple without consulting their relatives.

Gāndharva

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[1] यदश्विना पृच्छमानावयातं त्रिचक्रेण वहतुं सूर्यायाः।
विश्वे देवा अनु तद्वामजानन्पुत्रः पितराववृणीत पूषा॥ *ṚV.*, X. 85, 14.
आ वां रथं दुहिता सूर्यस्य कार्ष्मेवातिष्ठदर्वता जयन्ती।
विश्वे देवा अन्वमन्यन्त हृद्भिः समु श्रिया नासत्या सचेथे॥ ibid., I. 116, 17.

[2] आ वां पतित्वं सख्याय जग्मुषी योषावृणीत जेन्या युवां पती॥ ibid., 119, 5.

[3] X. 34, 5.

[4] ibid., I. 134, 3.

[5] ibid., I. 112, 19; 116, 1; 117, 20; X. 39, 7; 65, 12.

It was later ratified as a *fait accompli* under the Hindu law of *Factum Valet* by the parents of the contracting parties as was actually done by Purumilha, the father of Kamadyu, the eloping bride The most interesting case of a Gāndharva wedlock in Indian history has been furnished by the *Mahābharata* in the story of Dusyanta and Śakuntalā which later became the theme of Kālidāsa's immortal play, the *Abhijñana Śakuntala*

The incident of elopement, mentioned above, would indirectly refer to another form of marriage—that of Rāksasa of the later day classification—in which the carrying away of the bride by force was considered essential It was not necessary that the women, thus carried, should be inimical to such a project In later literature Subhadrā, Rukmini, or Vāsavadattā proved a great help to the flight and aided the abducting hero—Arjuna, Krsna or Udayana—in the daring exploit The elopement of Vimadi and Kamadyu thus equally furnishes us with an instance of the Rāksasa form of marriage as with the Gāndharva one

Raksasa

In a hymn[1] of the *Rgveda* we come across a sort of marriage absolutely unknown to the later writers and uncovered by their classification It is a companionate sort of contractual marriage In the hymn addressed to Urvaśi by Purūravā we find a sort of agreement for the breach of which the king had to rue afterwards when Urvaśi deserted him and flew up in the sky She had consented to live with the king on the condition that the latter must look after her ewes and must not appear naked before her Urvaśi originally belonged to the Gandharvas to whom she had to return if an occasion permitted her The Gandharvas, sad and unhappy due to their separation from her, thought out a project and launched upon it On a dark night they disturbed Purūravā in his sleep and while pretending to steal away the ewes they bleated like lambs[2] The king left his bed in a desperate hurry and pursued

[1] *RV* X 95

[2] ibid, 95, 3

them little minding that he had been in bed and undressed. The wily Gandharvas at once contrived to cause a flash of lightning and thus revealed to Urvaśī the naked form of Purūravā. Urvaśī was rendered instantaneously free from the contract.

Referring to the stipulations of the agreement she addressed the bewailing king thus: "I knew, and warned thee, on that day. Thou wouldst not hear me. What sayest thou, when naught avails thee?"[1] This temporary union was evidently based on one-sided love. Urvaśī, like the wind[2] 'difficult to capture', did not respond to his mad love but being compelled by the condition of the contract she 'coldly received his fond caresses.'[3] She 'yielded to his desires and made him the master of her external body.'[4] The case of Urvaśī is that of a courtesan. She acts in the manner of a common prostitute selling her body to *any* man. Naturally such a woman cannot give her soul away to the man who wooes her. She is not a common Aryan woman but a temporary mistress. The agreement clearly looks like one with a mistress, who on a certain consideration agrees to live with an influential king, reverting in the end to her old profession. In clear words she says: "Go home again, thou fool, thou hast not won me."[5] And then she explains the woman that she is, a veritable courtesan: "With women there can be no lasting friendship: hearts of hyenas are the hearts of women."[6] In vain does Purūravā threaten and wail: "Thy lover shall flee forth this day for ever, to seek, without return, the farthest distance. Then let his bed be in Destruction's bosom, and there let fierce rapacious wolves devour him."[7]

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[1] अज्ञासं त्वा विदुषी सस्मिन्नहन्न म आशृणोः किमभुग्वदासि ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 95, 11.

[2] दुरापना वात इवाहमस्मि ॥ ibid., 2.

[3] त्रिः स्म माह्नः श्नथयो वैतसेनोत स्म मेऽव्यत्यै पृणासि ॥ ibid., 5.

[4] पुरूरवोऽनु ते केतमायं राजा मे वीर तन्वस्तदासीः ॥ ibid.

[5] प्र तत्ते हिनवा यत्ते अस्मे परेह्यस्तं नहि मूर मापः ॥ ibid., 13.

[6] न वै स्त्रैणानि सख्यानि सन्ति सालावृकाणां हृदयान्येता ॥ ibid., 15.

[7] सुदेवो अद्य प्रपतेदनावृत्परावतं परमां गन्तवा उ ।
अधा शयीत निर्ऋतेरुपस्थेऽधैनं वृका रभसासो अद्युः ॥ ibid., 14.

Urvaśī listens to nothing: nothing moves her to pity or passion. Such marriage cannot obviously be an outcome of sacraments. This same story has been immortalized by Kālidāsa in his famous play *Vikramorvaśī*. There too no sacraments are performed for the temporary union. The nymph comes, lives her hour of joy, and disappears.

A loose kind of association existed at times between the Aryan master and his female slaves. At the time of marriage these slave girls were in certain cases given away along with the bride for sexual needs. They are called *vadhus*,[1] marriageable women. Although by conferring on these women the title of *vadhu*, legal sanction has been given to a union with these, yet it may be supposed that such connections would have proved no better than virtual concubinage, and undoubtedly where such connections resulted from a casual laxity of the master, the favoured slave would not have fared better than a concubine in comparison with his legally wedded wife. It is, however, of singular value to note that whatever the Ṛgvedic Aryan touched he turned into gold, and it may give us a certain degree of satisfaction to learn that whenever he cared to touch his slave he raised her to the status of a wife in many cases enjoying the privileges of the legal wife. The son born of such love would be considered legitimate. Kakṣivān, as we have already noted above, was the son of a slave mother and so also were some other important Vedic personages like Auśija, Kavasa or Vatsa. No body can doubt the perfect legitimacy of Kakṣivān, for not only was he one of the important authors of the *Ṛgveda* but was also favoured with two excellent marriages both making him a son-in-law of ruling princes. Then, again, Ayus, the son of Purūravā Aila, to whom the *Ṛgveda* refers as already conceived by Urvaśī,[2] is consecrated as the heir apparent of his father in the *Vikramorvaśī*[3] of Kālidāsa.

[1] ṚV, VIII. 19, 36; cf V. 47, 6.
[2] ibid, X. 95, 12-13.
[3] Act V.

Perhaps another way of getting a wife in marriage was through service. Śyāvāśva and Vimada, whose names and stories we read in the *Ṛgveda* itself, are described in later literature to have received from their respective fathers-in-law their brides through their services to them.

We shall now pass on to marriage proper.

It has already been stated above that on festal gatherings and such other occasions there were opportunities when unmarried young men and maidens formed acquaintance. If such an acquaintance proved lasting and love developed, permission for marriage was sought from the parents, especially from the father and in his absence from the brother. The negotiation was effected through the best friend of the suitor who was termed *vara* and who escorted the bride home. The best friend of Soma and the *varas* of Sūryā were the Aśvins. When the consent of the father had been received, the marriage took place in which the bride was given away with her dowry. The marriage was performed in the traditional manner *in the presence of both the parties and their friends* in the house of the bride's parents as in the case of Sūryā which we shall describe below. The *Ṛgveda* gives us enough material, which, when pieced together, would make up the incidents that preceded and accompanied the tying of the nuptial knot and the religious rites that consecrated it. An account of the details of marriage is found in hymn 85 of the tenth book of the *Ṛgveda* which may be analysed now.

Marriage proper

This wedding hymn, it may be said at the very outset, is a disjointed piece of verses loosely strung together. It has very little unity. Sūryā's bridal is the theme of this hymn. Sūryā is the typical Aryan bride and her instance may serve as a type to show the way in which the common Aryan marriages were performed. In the hymn there is a reference to a Svayamvara[1]—a tournament in which the suitors were

[1] ṚV., X. 85, 14.

asked to drive their chariots to a fixed goal, the foremost driver to be rewarded with the hand of the bride Svayamvara of course was not the common type of marriage as we read of other forms, already enumerated above, which were the result of free love It may have been a feature in the wedding of royalties In the Svayamvara alluded to the Aśvins drove their chariot foremost[1] thus proving their elegibility to marry Sūryā In this hymn there is a clear indication of the fact that Soma was the wooer and therefore Aśvins were only the bestmen of the bridegroom, dut nevertheless, from other references[2] it would appear that they themselves were the husbands that Sūryā chose for her The reason of this *apparent contradiction is that the* various verses which contain this conflicting evidence are composed by different poets at different periods of time This union is a piece of Nature myth Sūryā is the light generated by the sun and so she has been called the daughter of Savitā This light is borrowed by the moon, Soma—to whom specific reference is made *in the opening verses of the hymn*[3]*—with which* she shines and which she reflects to the Earth The light itself is carried to the moon through the medium of the morning and evening twilight, that the twin Aśvins are This is why there is a reference made to the Aśvins on whose car the bride Sūryā is said[4] *to be borne to Soma*, her husband This is why *again* she has been mentioned as choosing the Aśvins also as her husbands But we are not concerned here with the inner sense and meta physical interpretation of *the hymn or its several incidents* We shall deal here only with the human element which features in the verses and in the personified phenomena which are em bodied therein It is because of this reason that a study of the similes and such other seemingly superfluous points becomes

[1] *RV* I 116 17

[2] आ वा पतित्वं सख्याय जग्मुषी योषावृणीत जन्या युवा पती । ibid, 119 5 cf I 118 5

[3] ibid X 85 1 5 ibid, 9

[4] पूषा त्वेतो नयतु हस्तगृह्याश्विना त्वा प्र वहतां रथेन । ibid 26

most essential for our subject. Griffith observes: "The main object of this composite hymn, which is one of the latest in the *Ṛgveda*, is the ceremony of marriage in general and more especially the wedding of Sūryā, the daughter of the Sun, who is regarded as the typical bride. The various deities and deified objects, of which Soma, Sūryā, and Marriage are the chief, are enumerated in the index of hymns. The Ṛishi or seer is Sūryā,"[1]

'In *Aghā* days,' i.e. in the month of Māgha, February, when the moon is in the lunar mansion maghā, the festivities prior to marriage commenced. This was the beginning of the Spring. An important feature of these festivities was the slaying of oxen for the purposes of feasts. Feasts even now precede the actual marriage. The festivities perhaps marked the commencement of the decorations, the anointing of the body with termeric, etc. In the next month of Arjunī, i.e. Phālguna, actual wedding took place. The verse in point is very conclusive. It reads:

> "The bridal pomp of Sūryā, which Savitar started, moved along.
> In Maghā days are oxen slain, in Arjunīs they wed the bride."[2]

This verse with which the hymn should have opened had its author cared for logical unity, however, comes slightly late, and the opening verses, 1 to 5, are utilized in an attempt to identify the celestial Soma with the moon. These are followed up by others. 6 to 17, which relate to the wedding of Soma with the sun maiden Sūryā. The Aśvins here appear in the capacity of groomsmen and they ask for the hand of Sūryā from her father on behalf of Soma, the moon.[3] The bride had a 'dear bridal friend'[4] and was led to her husband's home by another

[1] *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, p. 266, footnote.

[2] सूर्याया वहतुः प्रागात्सविता यमवासृजत् ।
अघासु हन्यन्ते गावोऽर्जुन्योः पर्युह्यते ॥ *Ṛ.V.*, X. 85, 13.

[3] अश्विना वरा ibid., X. 85, 8; अश्विनास्तामुभा वरा ibid., 9; also cf. ibid., 14.

[4] रैभ्यासीदनुदेयी ibid., 6.

such friend.[1] In the present case Raibhī and Nārāśamsī, the personified sacred song and praise, have been conceived as acting for such friends[2] She took with her a bed (suggested by the pillow[3]), articles of toilet[4] and riches[5] comprising of several items of dowry The Aśvins were her 'bridesmen'[6] and 'Agni was the leader of the train'[7] when the sun-god Savitṛ 'bestowed his willing Sūryā on her lord'[8] The chariot on which Sūryā was borne to her new home was 'a spirit-fashioned car,'[9] well-shaped, coloured with a golden yellow hue[10] and provided with two[11] strong clean[12] wheels[13] and an axle[14] It was a canopied[15] light rolling[16] chariot decked with a beautiful railing of cross bars[17] and yoked to two white bulls[18] It was made of the wood of Śālmali[19] or the silk-cotton tree and was decorated with Kimśuka flowers[20] The bride put on her diaphanous attire[21] and then

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[1] नाराशसी न्योचनी *RV*, X 85 6

[2] ibid

[3] उपबर्हण ibid, 7

[4] अभ्यञ्जनम् ibid

[5] कोश ibid

[6] ibid, 8

[7] अग्निरासीत्पुरोगव ibid

[8] सूर्यां यत्पत्ये शसन्ती मनसा सवितादधात् । ibid, 9

[9] मनस्मय ibid, 12

[10] हिरण्यवर्णं ibid, 20

[11] चक्रे ibid, 11 12

[12] शुची ते चक्रे ibid, 12

[13] सुचक्रम् ibid, 20

[14] अक्ष ibid, 12

[15] कुरीर छन्द ओपश ibid, 8 छदि ibid, 10

[16] सुवृत ibid, 20

[17] प्रतिधय ibid, 8

[18] शुक्रावनड्वाहावास्ता ibid, 10, गावौ ibid, 11

[19] शल्मलि ibid, 20

[20] सुकिंशुकं ibid

[21] भद्रमिद्वासो ibid, 6

mounted[1] the sacred car. The *drive to the new home* was accompanied with hymns and chants.[2] Next there follows in course of two verses[3] a description of the couple,—the sun represented by Sūryā and the moon—the prototype of human marriage, as an inseparable pair. "Moving in close succession by their magic power," sings the seer, "these children twain come dancing to the sacrifice. One of the pair beholdeth all existing things; the other ordereth seasons and is born again.[4] He, born afresh, is new and new for ever: ensign of days he goes before the Mornings. Coming, he orders for the gods their portion. The Moon prolongs the days of our existence."[5] "Stanzas 20-33," says Griffith, "contain a collection of formulæ repeated when the bride mounts her *chariot, while she is travelling to her* husband's house, when she arrives there, and on the following morning."[6] But this arrangement of the verses would hardly be correct, for the verses 21 and 22 are clearly addresses to the Viśvāvasu Gandharva, the last guardian deity of the virgin, on bed at the time when the husband approaches the newly wedded wife with a view to consummate the marriage. But *of this we shall treat in due course.*

Thus while the priests were kindling the fire and praising Agni and juice was being squeezed out[7] under the pressing mortar, the chief priest intoned the marriage hymn. The bridal Pomp started and moved along.[8] Both the parties pressed forward within the enclosure. Then the marriage proper and the rites incidental thereto followed but of these we have no

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[1] आरोहत्प्रयती पतिम् *ṚV.*, X. 85, 12; आ रोह ibid., 20.

[2] ibid., 23. 32, etc.

[3] ibid., 18-19.

[4] पूर्वापरं चरतो माययैतौ शिशू क्रीळन्तौ परि यातो अध्वरम् ।
विश्वान्यन्यो भुवनाभिचष्ट ऋतूंरन्यो विदधज्जायते पुनः ॥ ibid., 18

[5] नवो नवो भवति जायमानोऽह्नां केतुरुषसामेत्यग्रम् ।
भागं देवेभ्यो विदधात्यायन्प्र चन्द्रमास्तिरते दीर्घमायुः ॥ ibid., 19.

[6] *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, p. 270, footnote.

[7] *ṚV.*, X. 85, 3.

[8] सूर्याया वहतुः प्रागात्सविता यमवासृजत । ibid., 13.

clear evidence. The marital ceremonies being over, the injunctions and the āśirvacana of the priest followed. He addressed the bride: "Now from the noose of Varuṇa I free thee, wherewith most blessed Savitar hath bound thee. In Law's seat, to the world of virtuous action, I give thee up uninjured with thy consort."[1] The noose of Varuṇa in the above verse refers to the waist-band with which the bride was girded after she had been bathed, combed and dressed for the marriage ceremony.[2] The verse is slightly subtle and embodies a somewhat hidden sense. The maiden before her marriage is naturally the ward of Varuṇa, who is the guard and ordainer of all laws of nature. His noose, which is the chastizer of all evil-doers, is here the belt of virgin chastity. From this restriction with which the father binds the daughter[3] till her marriage the priest now frees[4] the bride and gives her over 'in law's seat'[5]—under the established rules and ceremonies of marriage—to her husband in sexually uninjured state[6] for further virtuous actions in the world.[7] "Hence, and not thence," the priest enjoins her, "I send thee free. I make thee softly fettered there, that, boundless Indra, she may live blest in her fortune and her sons."[8] Once the wife is permanently settled with her husband her freedom is tenderly restricted. From her father's house and from his care she is set free but she now takes charge of new responsibilities in her husband's home. In course of his nuptial benediction the officiating priest announces her new status as a wife in the following words: "Go to the house to

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[1] प्र त्वा मुञ्चामि वरुणस्य पाशाद्येन त्वाबध्नात्सविता सुशेवः ।
ऋतस्य योनौ सुकृतस्य लोकेऽरिष्टां त्वा सह पत्या दधामि ॥ *ṚV*, X 85, 24.

[2] Max Muller: *Rigveda Saṁhitā*, Vol. VI Preface, p. 14

[3] cf. प्रेतो मुञ्चामि नामुतः *ṚV*., X. 85, 25.

[4] ibid.

[5] ऋतस्य योनौ ibid, 24.

[6] ibid.

[7] सुकृतस्य लोके ibid.

[8] प्रेतो मुञ्चामि नामुतः सुबद्धाममुतस्करम् ।
यथेयमिन्द्र मीढ्वः सुपुत्रा सुभगासति ॥ ibid, 25.

be the household's mistress and speak as lady to thy gathered people.[1] Happy be thou and prosper with thy children here: be vigilant to rule thy household, in this home. Closely unite thy body with this man, thy lord. So shall ye, full of years, address your company."[2] Soon after the idea of inauspiciousness haunting auspiciousness asserts to the mind of the priest and he refers to the possibility of the fast clinging female incubus in the next verse from whom he absolves the bride: "Her hue is blue and red: the fiend who clingeth close is driven off. Well thrive the kinsmen of this bride: the husband is bound fast in bonds."[3] The husband himself is no more free. He is as much dependent on his wife as she on him. At this stage the bride gives away her woollen robe[4] and other riches to Brahmin priests[5] in *dakṣiṇā* as a consequence of which all inauspiciousness leaves her. Her very maiden misfortune, as though, leaves the bride and like herself is wedded to a kindly husband.[6] Then follow two verses, 31-32, ensuring the safety of the route of the bride to her husband's home and then again the benedictions.

As members of both the parties pressed into the sacred enclosure to have a look at the bride, the priest addressed them thus: "Signs of good fortune mark the bride: come all of you and look at her. Wish her prosperity, and then return unto your homes again."[7] This incident in later marital literature is technically called *Sumaṅgalī* which word has endured till now. The term actually occurs in the above hymn. The

[1] गृहान्गच्छ गृहपत्नी यथासो वशिनी त्वं विदथमा वदासि ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 85, 26.

[2] इह प्रियं प्रजया ते समृध्यतामस्मिन्गृहे गार्हपत्याय जागृहि ।
एना पत्या तन्वं सं सृजस्वाधाजिव्री विदथमा वदाथः ॥ ibid., 27.

[3] ibid., 28.

[4] शामुल्यं ibid, 29.

[5] ब्रह्मभ्यो वि भजा वसु । ibid.

[6] कृत्यैषा पद्वती भूत्व्या जाया विशते पतिम् ॥ ibid.

[7] सुमङ्गलीरियं वधूरिमां समेत पश्यत ।
सौभाग्यमस्यै दत्वायायास्तं वि परेतन ॥ ibid., 33.

garments of the bride were at this stage given away to the priest Her robe was no longer fit for use and the priest advised her "Pungent is this and bitter this, filled, as it were, with arrow-barbs, empoisoned and not fit to eat The Brahman who knows Sūryā well deserves the garment of the bride [1] The fringe, the cloth that decks her head, and then the triply parted robe,—behold the hues which Sūryā wears these doth the Brahman purify '[2]

After the elders had blessed her, the husband took her hand in his and pointing out the moral object of the marriage addressed his wife "I take thy hand in mine for happy fortune that thou mayest reach old age with me thy husband Gods, Aryaman, Bhaga, Savitar, Purandhi, *have given thee to be my* household's mistress "[3] Again the husband invokes Pūsan to bless him and his wife in their affection ."O Pūsan, send her on as most auspicious, her who shall be the sharer of my pleasures , her who shall twine her loving arms about me, and welcome all my love and mine embraces '[4]

In verses 38 39 the priest again invokes Agni "For thee, with bridal train, they, first, escorted Sūryā to her home Give to the husband in return, Agni the wife with progeny [5] Agni hath given the bride again with splendour and with ample life Long lived be he who is her lord , a hundred autumns let him live '[6] The husband turned to his wife again and

[1] तृप्टमेतत्कटुकमेतदपाष्टवद्विपवन्नैतदत्तवे ।
सूर्या यो ब्रह्मा विद्यात्स इद्वाधूयमर्हति ॥ *RV* X 85 34

[2] आशसन विशसनमथो अधिविकर्तनम ।
सूर्याया पश्य रूपाणि तानि ब्रह्मा तु शुन्धति ॥ ibid 35

[3] गृह्णामि ते सौभगत्वाय हस्त मया पत्या जरदष्टिर्यथास ।
भगो अयमा सविता पुरंधिर्मह्यं त्वादुर्गार्हपत्याय देवा ॥ ibid 36

[4] तां पूषञ्छिवतमामेरयस्व यस्या बीज मनुष्या वपन्ति ।
या न ऊरू उशती विश्रयाते । यस्यामुशन्त प्रहराम शेपम ॥ ibid 37

[5] तुभ्यमग्रे पर्यवहन्त्सूर्या वहतुना सह ।
पुन पतिभ्यो जाया दा अग्ने प्रजया सह ॥ ibid 38

[6] पुन पत्नीमग्निरदादायुषा सह वर्चसा ।
दीर्घायुरस्या य पतिर्जीवति शरद शतम् ॥ ibid 39

addressed his wife in two verses, 40-41, which logically should have come before or after the verses 21-22, as follows: "Soma obtained her first of all; next the Gandharva was her lord. Agni was thy third husband: now one born of woman is thy husband.[1] Soma to the Gandharva, and to Agni the Gandharva gave: and Agni hath bestowed on me riches and sons and this my spouse."[2] In course of the next six verses 42-47 the formulæ were repeated when the bridegroom had returned with his bride to his father's home, and offered sacrifice. The couple are addressed first, and then the bride is exhorted and blessed.

The priest in solemn tone abjured the pair to keep close to each other and to part never. "Be ye not parted;" said he, "dwell ye here; reach the full time of human life. With sons and grandsons sport and play, rejoicing in your own abode."[3] Verse 43 seems to have been addressed to the bride by the bridegroom. In tender simple words the husband says: "So may Prajāpati bring children forth to us; may Aryaman adorn us till old age come nigh. Not inauspicious enter thou thy husband's house: bring blessing to our bipeds and our quadrupeds."[4] In this speech the husband gives over to his wife the charge of his entire household. The priest of the bridegroom's party joined his voice with the husband's and welcomed the new wife, "Come, O desired of the gods, beautiful one with tender heart, with the charming look, good towards your husband, kind towards animals, destined to bring forth heroes. May you bring happiness for both our quadrupeds and bipeds."[5]

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[1] सोमः प्रथमो विविदे गन्धर्वो विविद उत्तरः ।
तृतीयो अग्निष्टे पतिस्तुरीयस्ते मनुष्यजाः ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 85, 40.

[2] सोमो ददद्गन्धर्वाय गन्धर्वो ददग्नये ।
रयिं च पुत्रांश्चादादग्निर्मह्यमथो इमाम् ॥ ibid., 41.

[3] इहैव स्तं मा वि यौष्टं विश्वमायुर्व्यश्नुतम् ।
क्रीळन्तौ पुत्रैर्नप्तृभिर्मोदमानौ स्वे गृहे ॥ ibid., 42

[4] आ नः प्रजां जनयतु प्रजापतिराजरसाय समनक्त्वर्यमा ।
अदुर्मङ्गलीः पतिलोकमा विश शं नो भव द्विपदे शं चतुष्पदे ॥ ibid., 43.

[5] अघोरचक्षुरपतिघ्न्येधि शिवा पशुभ्यः सुमनाः सुवर्चाः ।
वीरसूर्देवकामा स्योना शं नो भव द्विपदे शं चतुष्पदे ॥ ibid., 44.

The priest getting further alive to the duties and rights of the bride and of her status in the new home, raised his voice and in a sweet tempered speech invoked Indra, to make her 'blest in her sons and fortunate' and to 'vouchsafe to her ten sons, and make her husband the eleventh man'[1]; and then turning to the bride he spoke of the nature of her charge in a grave authoritative tone: "Over thy husband's father and thy husband's mother bear full sway. Over the sister of thy lord, over his brothers rule supreme."[2] Here the charge is completed and *the newly wedded wife is made the full owner and vigorous* mistress of the house of her husband. It seems that the bride *directly took charge of responsibility* of the new home from her mother-in-law just as her husband took over the manly responsibilities of his race from his father. Nay, the entire inmates of the house—the quadrupeds and bipeds, youngsters and elders, both male and female—became henceforth the concern of the new wife. She became the empress (*samrājñī*) of her new domain. Now there remained only one thing more to be sought for and ensured—the complete fusion of the hearts of the wife and the husband. And both therefore kneeling, knee to knee, and uniting their tones uttered the impassioned prayer in a ringing tender voice: "So may the Universal gods, so may the Waters join our hearts. May Mātariśvan, Dhātar, and Deṣṭrī together bind us close."[3]

Where could the majesty of marriage be better expressed than in this bridal hymn, the kindly and grave invocation of the bridegroom, the deep tenderness of the bride touching even the animals, and the conjugal devotion and the impressive stateliness and *imperious dignity of womanhood?* The *main* features of the Ṛgvedic marriage ceremony are still preserved

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[1] इमां त्वमिन्द्र मीढ्वः सुपुत्रां सुभगां कृणु ।
दशास्यां पुत्राना धेहि पतिमेकादशं कृधि ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 85, 45.

[2] सम्राज्ञी श्वशुरे भव सम्राज्ञी श्वश्र्वां भव ।
ननान्दरि सम्राज्ञी भव सम्राज्ञी अधि देवृषु ॥ *ibid*, 46

[3] समञ्जन्तु विश्वे देवाः समापो हृदयानि नौ ।
सं मातरिश्वा सं धाता समु देष्ट्री दधातु नौ ॥ ibid., 47.

in the marital rites of the Hindus and they have endured well for the last several millennia.

When the marriage ceremony was over the bride was escorted by her groomsmen to her husband's home where some other rites completing her marriage awaited her; part of these has already been alluded to in course of the analysis of the hymn regarding Sūryā's bridal above. She mounted a beautiful car made of silk-cotton wood, yellow coloured, decked with railings, canopy and red flowers and drawn by two white bulls. The details of the outfit of the chariot have already been described above. As the chariot drove off chants and prayers were crooned[1] to make the highway on which the pair was to journey free from lurking dangers and other obstacles. "Straight in direction be the paths," blessed the priest, "and thornless, whereon our fellows travel to the wooing (and back). Let Aryaman and Bhaga lead us: perfect, O gods, the union of the wife and husband."[2] The priest continues, "Let not the highway thieves who lie in ambush find the wedded pair. By pleasant ways let them escape the danger, and let foes depart."[3] Then he prayed to undo the effect of the diseases and other inauspicious and ungodly impediments: "Diseases, which from various folk follow the bride's resplendent train,—these let the holy gods again bear to the place from which they came."[4]

Departure of the Bride

Of the post-marriage rites which the newly married couple had to perform the chief was one relating to the consummation of marriage. Soon after the arrival at the husband's dwelling the pair proceeded to consummate their marriage. The purpose of marriage

Consummation of marriage

[1] *ṚV.*, X. 85, 23. 32.

[2] अनृक्षरा ऋजवः सन्तु पन्था येभिः सखायो यन्ति नो वरेयम् ।
समर्यमा सम्भगो नो निनीयात्सं जास्पत्यं सुयममस्तु देवाः ॥ ibid., 23.

[3] मा विदन्परिपन्थिनो य आसीदन्ति दम्पती ।
सुगेभिर्दुर्गमतीतामप द्रान्त्वरातयः ॥ ibid., 32.

[4] ये वध्वश्चन्द्रं वहतुं यक्ष्मा यन्ति जनादनु ।
पुनस्तान्यज्ञिया देवा नयन्तु यत आगताः ॥ ibid., 31.

has already been discussed above as being one of procreating children and perpetuating the race. But every act of the Rgvedic Aryan was impregnated with symbolism and was supposed to have divine sanction behind it. Everything must be done with the aid of sacraments and in profound dignity. And now therefore when the husband *proceeded to become* intimate with his wife he approached the nuptial bed with due ceremony. It was not the stifled passion of two beasts waiting for the hour let loose but an act the sanctity of which was upheld with sacred *mantras*. The stages of the development of the bride's physique were presided over by divine forces of which we have already treated above. Soma was the deity who held sway over her first *of all when the various humours of her body* shaped her proper form.[1] Then she came under the charge of the Gandharva,[2] who having endowed her with accomplishments gave over to Agni,[3] who animated her and made herself yield to her last husband, one born of a woman.[4] It is to be noted that all the four have been referred to as husbands.[5] The order, however, has been changed in the Brāhmana literature where the husband takes the charge from the Gandharva and not from Agni. The Rgvedic poet does not seem to have been very careful on this point as he clearly gives the order noted above[6] while he is equally explicit and emphatic in upholding the order of the Brāhmana literature and in acting as its forerunner. Here again the earthly husband takes charge of his bride not from Agni but from the Viśvāvasu Gandharva.[7] On the association of Gandharva with the Aryan marriage Macdonell observes, "The union of Gandharva with the water *nymph is typical of marriage.* He is therefore connected with the

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[1] सोमः प्रथमो विविदे *Rl* X 85 40

[2] गन्धर्वो विविद उत्तर । ibid

[3] तृतीयो अग्निष्टे पति ibid

[4] तुरीयस्ते मनुष्यजाः ॥ ibid

[5] ibid

[6] ibid 40-41.

[7] ibid, 21 22

wedding ceremony, and the unmarried maiden is said to belong to Ganhdarva as well as to Soma and Agni (10, 85, 40-1). The Gandharva Viśvāvasu in the first days of wedlock is regarded as a rival of the husband (ib. 22), and the Gandharvas' love of women is prominent in later texts (cp. MS. 3, 78). The Gandharvas and Apsarases thus preside over fertility and are prayed to by those who desire offspring (Paṃcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa, 19, 3[2])."[1]

After the first four days following the marriage the husband approached his wife lying on her bed by the side of a rod symbolizing the Viśvāvasu Gandharva and acting as the witness of the couple's abstinence. He put his foot on the bed and addressed the rod in the following words:

"Rise up from hence: this maiden hath a husband. I laud Viśvāvasu with hymns and homage. Seek in her father's home another fair one, and find the portion from of old assigned thee.[2]

"Rise up from hence, Viśvāvasu: with reverence we worship thee. Seek thou another willing maid, and with her husband leave the bride."[3]

The prayer over, he removed the rod from the bed, stepped into it and united his body with that of his wife with a view to propagate his race. The *Atharva Veda* even furnishes details of the union and gives formulæ and prayers to be addressed to the male genital (*śiśnadeva*) itself in the manner of a deity.

The wedding dress of the bride is not specifically described, but mention is made of the pre and post marriage dress of the bride. It seems that she put on a woollen dress[4] on the eve of actual marriage. This dress

Wedding dress

[1] *Vedic Mythology*, p. 137.

[2] उदीर्ष्वातः पतिवती ह्येषा विश्वावसुं नमसा गीर्भिरीळे ।
अन्यामिच्छ पितृषदं व्यक्तां स ते भागो जनुषा तस्य विद्धि ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 85, 21.

[3] उदीर्ष्वातो विश्वावसो नमसेळामहे त्वा ।
अन्यामिच्छ प्रफर्व्यं सञ्जायां पत्यासृज ॥ *ibid.*, 22.

[4] शामुल्यं ibid., 29.

was not considered auspicious,[1] but pungent, bitter, filled, as it were, with arrow-barbs, empoisoned and not fit for her use.[2] It was given away to the officiating priest[3] who well deserved it.[4] Then the bride put on a lovely robe[5] coloured in several hues.[6] There seem to have been three items of her dress—the fringe or the border cloth (*āśasanam*) which was perhaps an over-garment, the head-cloth (*viśasanam*) and the under-garment or the divided skirt[7] (*adhivikartanam*), the same as the *śāmulya*,[8] the woollen lower garment. This post-marriage mantle was an auspicious robe purified by Brahmā[9] and was fit for the use of the bride in contrast with one which she wore before the marriage to which there were possibilities of female fiends sticking.[10] The Ṛgvedic custom of the bride's robe being given away before the *Pāṇigrahaṇa* still endures but with the distinction that it is not given to the priest but to the barbar aiding the nuptial ceremonies.

Some remarks about marriage

We have marshalled in the foregoing pages enough material which may give an idea as to the purport and necessity of Aryan marriage. The Ṛgvedic priest and seer knows of no nobler and more *tender relation than* that existing between the kindly husband and his devoted wife. She is praised as the very home and bliss of his hearth. This condition of life can be comprehensible only if love was the basis of marriage and religious duty the end of it. It was always a *willing*[11] bride that was given away in

[1] cf. *ṚV.*, X. 85, 29.
[2] ibid., 34.
[3] सूर्यां यो ब्रह्मा विद्यात्स इद्वाधूयमर्हति ॥ ibid.
[4] ibid.
[5] ibid., 6
[6] रूपाणि ibid., 35.
[7] ibid.
[8] ibid., 29.
[9] तानि ब्रह्मा तु शुन्धति ॥ ibid., 35.
[10] cf. ibid., 28-30.
[11] उशती मनसा ibid., 9.

marriage. "Win thou his heart and let him win thy fancy; and he shall form with thee a blest alliance"[1] was the ideal on which the marriage and the home rested. This idea was so closely adhered to that in the absence of it we read of a rupture in relations of a wife and her husband. The story of Purūravā yearning for the fleeing Urvaśī may be quoted for an instance. The nymph looks down and reproaches the entreaties of the king: "Go home again thou fool, thou hast not won me."[2] This marriage had been contracted on the stipulations of an agreement and in it the winning of hearts, which was a necessary precedent in the Ṛgvedic marriage, had not been an antecedent feature. In such a companionship when the infatuated man embraced his woman thrice a day she received each time coldly his fond embraces and to his desires she yielded only her body[3] but never her spirit. On the contrary it was the ardent desire of the husband to wed a wife, 'who should twine her loving arms about him and welcome all his love and embraces.'[4] Thus the winning of hearts was a necessary preliminary to marriage. The poet sings: "In pride of beauty like a maid thou goest, O goddess, to the god who longs to win thee. And smiling, youthful, as thou shinest brightly, before him thou discovereth thy bosom." "Loveless marriages," rightly observes Oscar Wilde, "are horrible. But there is one thing worse than an absolutely loveless marriage. A marriage in which there is love, but on one side only; and in which of the two hearts one is sure to be broken." The Ṛgvedic society knew of no such relation between the husband and wife.

Love, the foundation of marriage, itself had become sanctified. It was not only walking round a rose garden in the bright moonshine; it was living together and working together.

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[1] तस्य वा त्वं मन इच्छा स वा तवाधा कृणुष्व संविदं सुभद्राम् ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 10, 14.

[2] परेह्यस्तं नहि मूर मापः ॥ ibid., X. 95, 13.

[3] त्रिः स्म माह्नः श्नथयो वैतसेनोत स्म मेऽव्यत्यै पृणासि ।
पुरूरवोऽनु ते केतमायं राजा मे वीर तन्वस्तदासीः ॥ ibid., 5.

[4] या न ऊरू उशती विश्रयाते यस्यामुशन्तः प्रहराम शेपम् ॥ ibid., X. 85, 37.

It entailed great responsibilities, both spiritual and temporal. Honeymoon is trifling in the scheme of a wedded life and is absolutely incapable of satisfying the deep needs of men and women. These needs are not always easy to understand. Even to ourselves we are strangers—such are the complexities of life. The Aryans married not so much for love as for higher and more permanent needs, for the propagation of their race, and they were 'bound for the world of life immortal'[1] and 'to the world of virtuous action.'[2] The bride was a veritable Arundhatī—one who never obstructs. The passage—'perfect, O gods, the wife and the husband'[3]—points to the same idea and so also does the following:

> "Be ye not parted; dwell ye here, reach the full time of human life.
> With sons and grandsons sport and play, rejoicing in your abode."[4]

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[1] अमृतस्य लोकं *RV*, X. 85, 20

[2] सुकृतस्य ibid, 24

[3] सं जास्पत्य सुयममस्तु देवा ॥ ibid, 23.

[4] ibid., 42.

Chapter IV

MARRIAGE—ITS FEATURES, CUSTOMS AND USAGES

In the *Ṛgveda* we get several features of marriage and we have references in this *Saṁhitā*, direct and indirect, to the existence of widows and their remarriage, the custom of suttee or widow-burning, beginnings of the later levirate (*niyoga*), monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, and incest comprising of marriages between brother and sister and connections between father and daughter and mother and son. The evidence is mostly of an inconclusive nature and the material absolutely scarce. The text at places suffers from apparent contradictions and the task of the historian becomes difficult which is further rendered complex by the obscurity of the sense of a passage. The similes, which generally refer to the mundane affairs of the Ṛṣi or the deity, frequently draw the scholar into the maze of a labyrinth and lead his reasoning to an absurd conclusion. Therefore the inferences and conclusions from such allusions can hardly be final

There is no doubt about the fact that the free Ṛgvedic society had needs of an endless type as is always the case with communities the resources, habits and ambitions of which have not become stagnated and been rendered stale by endurance. The early Aryan community was young and fresh. It had soon entered a new land from beyond the Hindukush where it had lived and fought with races, akin and foreign, and with which it had only recently severed its connection. Naturally it must have imbibed social features peculiar to other races and shed its own influence over them. This existence of mutual influences among races must account for the diversity of customs which very often look foreign to the Aryan usage. It is futile to argue that a particular trait is not one of a certain race as it has not been a permanent feature with that race while the same has been a characteristic one of a certain other. The

fact is that in the long life time of a race several traits and features are acquired, developed and perpetuated They some times grow from within and at times are imported from without These traits sometimes endure and sometimes die out There fore the argument is indeed feeble which says that a particular feature, since it is acquired from elsewhere, is foreign to a certain race The endeavour should always be to properly weigh such *customs and locate them in their due place, to draw inferences* which are not prejudical and to trace them, if possible, to their earlier environments

We shall deal with the above enumerated social features one by one The existence of widows is warranted by a few passages of the *Rgveda* These references, how-

Widows

ever, are few and far between, nevertheless they *do reflect a condition of society in which widows*, howsoever small their number, had a place A verse reads "Krsa and Śayu ye protect, ye Asvins twain ye two assist the widow and the worshipper '[1] This reference clearly shows the existence of widows who had not remarried In another passage[2] a similar state of a particular widow is referred to In it an enquiry is made as to who it was that made Indra's mother a widow We find an indirect allusion to the widows living in the society in verse 7 of the funeral hymn[3] of the tenth book The verse may be quoted in full to bring out its purport clearly

> "Let these unwidowed dames with noble husbands adorn themselves with fragrant balm and unguent
>
> Decked with fair jewels, tearless, free from sorrow, first let the matrons pass unto their house [4]

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[1] युव ह कृश युवमश्विना शयु युव विधन्ते विधवामुरुष्यथ । *RV*, X 40, 8

[2] ibid IV 18 12—कस्ते मानर विधवामचक्रच्छयु

[3] ibid X 18

[4] इमा नारीरविधवा सुपत्नीराञ्जनेन सर्पिषा सं विशन्तु ।
अनश्रवोऽनमीवा सुरत्ना आ रोहन्तु जनयो योनिमग्रे ॥ ibid X, 18, 7.

In this verse a procession of married women in coverture (*nārīravidhavāḥ supatnīḥ*) is described. It seems that like one in modern Hindu society the widow in the Ṛgvedic community also suffered the privation of being kept away from auspicious ceremonies. The present occasion was one of the remarriage of a widow whose husband had just died and who was yet lying by the side of the dead man. The sad occasion was at once turned into a happy and auspicious one. The procession of ladies in coverture (*nārīravidhavāḥ*) was perhaps expected to decorate the widow for her remarriage and so on this auspicious occasion the presence of widows was deprecated. The poet, therefore, expects only such ladies to form the procession as were unwidowed dames. The phrase *nārīravidhavāḥ* thus implies such widows as were extant in the society and had not remarried.

We find that in a work of the bulk of the *Ṛgveda* instances of widows are but a few. Although negative evidence does not conclusively prove the authenticity of a proposition, it may be asserted with ample certainty in the present case that this negative evidence when coupled with other additional data establishes the fact that the number of widows was almost negligible, for, as we shall see below, most of the widows of child-bearing age were absorbed in the society by remarriage.

Remarriage of Widows

The extreme need of men to protect the newly colonized land from the frequent inroads of its earlier masters, the aboriginal Dāsas and Dasyus, and to push the Aryan expansion eastwards would not leave the child-bearing widow by herself. It would seem that almost always she was remarried to the younger brother of her husband or his near kinsmen soon after his demise as this is borne out by a particular rite in the funeral hymn[1] of the *Ṛgveda*. When the husband died and his dead body was taken to the cremation ground or the cemetary either to be burnt on the funeral pyre or to be entombed, his widow also

[1] *RV.*, X. 18, 8.

accompanied it with unwidowed dames and other members of her family and the community She was then asked to lie down by the side of the corpse of her husband This was a remnant funeral rite of a remote age of which we shall have occasion to discuss below While she thus lay there her relations gathered round the remains of her husband 'whom time had struck down[1] and they 'according to their age made efforts to bear him to the grave[2] 'Unwidowed dames married to noble husbands, adorned with fragrant balm and unguent and with fair jewels, tearless, free from sorrow,[3] then gathered before the blazing fire and proceeded to decorate the new widow for a new life She was to be married at once and so the priest addressed her, ' Rise come unto the world of life, O woman come he is lifeless by whose side thou liest Wifehood with this thy husband was thy portion, who took thy hand and wooed thee as a lover '[4] The husband s brother who thus married her observed while taking away the bow from the hand of the deceased, ' From his dead hand I take the bow he carried, that it may be our power and might and glory There art thou, there , and here with noble heroes may we overcome all hosts that fight against us[5] In this manner the brother of the deceased inherited the command of his people through the bow, the dead hero appearing to be a Ksatriya of the princely order, and of the household through his sister in law whom he married (*didhisu*—wooer) It is in the fitness of things that the danger of war may have been hinted at in the very verse following one in which the widow is asked to return to the world of the living "There art thou there , says the brother of the dead hero, "and here with noble heroes may we overcome all hosts that fight against us[6] The perils of war could be combated

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[1] *RV* X 18 2 3

[2] ibid 3

[3] ibid 7

[4] उदीष्व नार्यभि जीवलोकं गतासुमेतमुप शेष एहि ।
हस्तग्राभस्य दिधिषोस्तवेदं पत्युर्जनित्वमभि सं बभूथ ॥ ibid 8

[5] अत्रैव त्वमिह वयं सुवीरा विश्वा स्पृधो अभिमतीर्जयेम ॥ ibid 9

[6] ibid

to a great extent with the increase of numerical strength of the community and this could be ensured only when there were enough mothers to bear male children. The existence of widows of child-bearing age would indeed cost the Ṛgvedic Aryan dearly and so he utilized her by marrying her at once. She could not remain a widow even for a day. The purpose of her existence is alluded to in the phrase 'with noble heroes,'[1] heroes whom she was to bear hereafter as the wife of her brother-in-law.

Thus soon after the death of the husband the widow was married to another man, probably a brother-in-law, even before the obsequies ended and the dead body was disposed of. We are not sure if an actual ceremony of marriage was performed but it would seem that at least the widow rose and caught the hand of her brother-in-law and thus became his legal wife. This marriage actually formed one of the funeral rites. It looks, however, inhuman on the part of the widow to give herself up to a life of married pleasures, to an existence of mirth and merriment just after the demise of her beloved spouse. For, even now, when we have unlearnt to respect our women, much more the widow, we do not marry by the burning pyre, how, one wonders, it could have been possible to wed a wailing widow at a time which witnessed the glory of women. If it was really so, the custom must have occasionally resulted in deliberate crimes. It may have been possible for a depraved woman to make sinister attempts to hasten the death of an unwanted husband and to get rid of him for marrying a paramour who may have wooed her and carried on with her even in the lifetime of her husband. But such laxities, of course, are the fate of all communities. As to the sentiment, erring against human tenderness by marrying by the dead body of a deceased husband, it may be said that the Aryans were a gay, materialistic (at least much less spiritual than their later descendants) people and their intrepid martial spirit did not

[1] सुवीरा *ṚV.*, X. 18, 9.

very much care for the partings through death "We have come forth," says the Rsi on the occasion of the burial, "for dancing and for laughter'[1] Everyday they fought and fell in the battle-field and it is possible that in order to keep down the number of their dead, and even to augment the number of fighting heroes, they at once took the widows as wives and started the propagation of their race afresh

We have another reference in the tenth book of the *Rg veda*[2] in support of widow remarriage The verse records

> "Where are ye Aśvins, in the evening where at morn? Where is your halting place, where rest ye for the night?
>
> Who brings you homeward as the widow bedward draws her husband's brother as the bride attracts the groom?'[3]

The evidence embodied in this verse refers to the customs generally obtaining in the society of the brother in law marrying his sister in law The evidence is conclusive The simile is very homely and has been drawn from commonplace incidents in the society where it was normal for the younger brother (*devara*) of the husband to make the widow of his brother his wife The wife herself has been styled as *devrkama*[4] making her love natural for her brother in law as also her taking him for a second husband

Mention is made in the *Rgveda* of other widows also led to be remarried (*gartaruh*)[5] The *Atharva Veda*[6] alludes to already remarried widows who inconsequence of their remarriage obtained the flattering style of *punarbhu*, reborn rejuvenated

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[1] प्राञ्चो अगाम नृतये हसाय द्राघीय आयु प्रतरं दधाना ॥ *RV* X 18 3

[2] ibid X 40 2

[3] कुह स्विद्दोषा कुह वस्तोरश्विना कुहाभिपित्व करत कुहोषतु ।
को वा शयुत्रा विधवेव देवर मर्यं न योषा कृणुते सधस्थ आ ॥ ibid

[4] ibid X 85 44

[5] ibid I 124 7

[6] IX, 5 28

In the case of disappearance of her husband[1] a woman could consider herself a widow and could marry a new husband in the manner of a widow.

We have no evidence as to whether the widow remarriage was accompanied with any nuptial ceremonies similar to those that figured in the first marriage. If we are to go by the evidence we have, probably no further rituals were required to make the widow a legally married wife. She was directly taken from the side of her dead husband and further begetting on her of heroes was hinted at. It was enough perhaps to make a widow his wife when her brother-in-law took her hand in his before the assembled witnesses who attested to the fresh status of the widow. The procession of the unwidowed dames itself would suggest that a second marriage of the widow did not entail the performance of the various nuptial rites.

Burning of the Widow

The question of widow remarriage brings that of widow burning to the fore for discussion. It is significant that in the whole range of the *Ṛgveda* there is not a single reference to the burning of the widow. It is very natural, for the widows were absorbed in the society by re-marriage. Macdonell thinks, however, that "Traces even survive (*ṚV.* 10, 188.9) which indicate that his widow and his weapons were once burnt with the body of the husband."[2] Elsewhere[3] he observes, "The fact that in the funeral obsequies of the *Ṛigveda* the widow lies down beside the body of her husband and his bow is removed from the dead man's hand, shows that both were in earlier times burnt with his body to accompany him to the next world, and a verse of the *Atharvaveda* calls the dying of the widow with her husband an old custom. The evidence of anthropology shows that this was a very primitive practice widely prevailing at the funeral of military chiefs, and it can be proved to go back

1 *ṚV.*, VI. 49, 8.
2 *Vedic Mythology*, p. 165.
3 *History of Sanskrit Literature.*

to the Indo European age These remarks are based on a verse[1] of the *Rgveda* which reads as follows Rise come unto the world of life O woman, come he is lifeless by whose side thou liest [2] But this part of the verse is soon followed up by the next line which gives the widow immediately away in marriage to the man who wooes her It reads Wifehood with this thy husband was thy portion who took thy hand and wooed thee as a lover [3] The allusion to the lying down of the widow by the side of the remains of her husband s body contained in the earlier part of the verse may be taken to be referring to a feature of the earlier times when widows may have been burnt along with the dead body of their husbands There is actually a verse contained in the *Atharva Veda*[4] which preserves such a custom of burning the widow and which it calls an ancient religious duty (*dharmam puranam*) It is probable that the ancient custom against which the *Atharva Veda* raises a banner of revolt on humanitarian grounds had already grown too old to be followed during the time which the *Rgveda* depicts But although the old custom had been given up the rites of its occasion it would seem still persisted and the procession of unwidowed women to adorn the widow for the company of the dead husband became one to deck her as a new bride The process must have become very mechanical and sad for it is hardly human to be changed from a widow to a bride immediately after the death of the nearest relative and supporter of a woman even in the gay conditions of the Rgvedic society

The preceding verse[5] has a passage—*arohantu yonimagre*—which has a special interest because as Kaegi remarks [6] with

[1] X 18 8
[2] ibid
[3] ibid
[4] इय नारी पतिलोकं वृणाना निपद्यत उपत्वा मर्त्य प्रेतम् ।
धर्मं पुराणं अनुपालयन्ती तस्यै प्रजां द्रविणं चेह धेहि ॥ XVIII 3 1
[5] *RV* X 18 7
[6] *The Rgveda* p 171

a very slight forgery it would give the highest sanction, the Vedic authority, for the custom of burning the widow on the grave of the husband." It is, however, correctly pointed out that the following verse contains an allusion to the ancient custom of burning the widow along with the remains of her dead husband. Nor is the allusion solitary and exclusive. We have already referred to the verse of the *Atharva Veda* which calls the custom an ancient one. And we know for certain that "widow-burning was practised among many primitive Indo-Germanic races in Asia and Europe,[1] and it can only be expected to have existed among the early Indo-Āryans in some form or other."[2] "But" observes Prof. Sarkar, "the Vedic literature shows very few traces of such a custom: partly no doubt because these texts are priestly in character, and widow burning is known to have prevailed elsewhere mainly amongst non-priestly warrior families; and partly because even amongst the ruling classes, cases of widow-burning were rare (and prevented) throughout the Vedic period,—as shown by authentic Kṣatriya dynastic traditions; while in the 'brāhman' society sex-relations seem to have been too lax to admit of the prevalence of such a practice."[3] Besides, as we have remarked elsewhere women in the society were very dear and their existence was necessary for the physical as well as religious needs of the Aryan. Another reason why the custom must not have been current is the useless waste of life. Most of the military chiefs were polygamous and many had hundreds of wives, both Āryan and non-Aryan, as we shall see in due context, and the custom, had it obtained, would have involved a colossal waste and would have proved a great drain on the meagre resources of the society. On the contrary, we find the services of the widow utilized immediately after her widowhood

[1] Herodotus: IV, 71 (Scythian); V. 5 (Thracian); Porcopius (De Bello Gothico): II. 14 (Gothic); Weinhold: Altnord. Leb., 476ff. (German); cf. Zimmer: Alt. Leb., 331.

[2] *Some Asp. of the Ear. Soc. His. of Ind.*, p. 82.

[3] ibid.

by bestowing her on a near kinsman of her deceased husband[1] The recurrence of the custom in much later times may have been caused by new reasons It may have been due to the jealousy of the husbands eager to preserve the chastity of their wives from the foreign intruders who mostly came without wives and appropriated Indian women Again it may have been an easy custom to practise when respect for women had much waned and when they had come to be considered as chattels to be used without any resistance or remonstrance The increase of women became appalling in the later Hindu society and already during the time of Bhartrhari women had come to be spoken of 'as incapable of being chaste,'[2] when the adolescent daughters had come to be 'compared to a basket of snakes which the father has to carry'[3] The widows in the society were surely those who had become such after the child bearing age or considerably later

Thus it is clear that unlike the widow of to day, the most miserable creature of the Hindu society about whom the great Urdu poet Hali writes feelingly—*Jisne hai randapā jhela, dar use hai dozakh ka kyā?*—her Rgvedic sister enjoyed more freely the air of liberty and the dictates of her conscience, and when remarried, she was a full fledged wife meant for love, progeny and prosperity'[4]

The chief object of marriage being the propagation of race by procreating children, the woman was always looked upon as a *potential mother* Her motherhood was the most distinguished trait in a woman The begetting of children was considered so very important that the impotency, absence or death of a husband was no bar to her giving birth to children This makeshift was termed as *Niyoga* in later literature It implied the begetting of a

Niyoga

[1] *RV*, X 18, 8

[2] V N Mehta Foreword to *Women in Rigveda* 1st Edition, p iv.

[3] ibid

[4] *RV*, X 18, 8

male child on a married woman through agencies other than her husband. The term itself is of a later origin as mentioned above but its implications were freely practised in the Ṛgvedic times. Frequent allusions are made in the *Ṛgveda* to the practice of levirate (*Niyoga*). We read of Purukutsānī obtaining a son[1] in the absence of her husband, who had been imprisoned elsewhere. We have several references[2] to the wives of weaklings procuring children from agencies other than their legally married husbands. Thus Purandhi Vadhrimatī obtained a son during the impotency of her husband.[3] Likewise another wife is said to have been granted offspring while her husband was a weakling. The text reads in praise of the Aśvins: "Ye, mounted on your chariot brought to Vimada the comely maid of Purumitra as a bride. Ye came unto the calling of the weakling's dame and granted noble offspring to the happy wife."[4] Again the Aśvins are praised to have given a son Hiraṇyahasta to another weakling's consort.[5]

Although *niyoga* could be practised on a woman by any kinsman of her husband, her brother-in-law (*devara*) seems to have been the favourite and the first preference. The widow, as we have seen in the foregoing pages, is generally married to him.[6] Even during the life-time of her husband he is generally the favourite. It is significant that while the bride is being married and the point of her husband's unfitness for cohabitation with her is yet in no way explicit, she is qualified with the adjective *devṛkāmā*, desirous of a union with her

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[1] अस्माकमत्र पितरस्त आसन्त्सप्त ऋषयो दौर्गहे बध्यमाने ।
त आयजन्त त्रसदस्युमस्या इन्द्रं न वृत्रतुरमर्धदेवम् ॥ *ṚV.*, IV. 42, 8.
पुरुकुत्सानी हि वामदाशद्धव्येभिरिन्द्रावरुणा नमोभिः ।
अथा राजानं त्रसदस्युमस्या वृत्रहणं ददथुरर्धदेवम् ॥ ibid., 9.

[2] ibid., I. 116, 13; 117, 24; VI. 62, 7; X. 39, 7; *cf.* X. 65, 12.

[3] ibid.

[4] युवं रथेन विमदाय शुन्ध्युवं न्यूहथुः पुरुमित्रस्य योषणाम् ।
युवं हवं वध्रिमत्या अगच्छतं युवं सुषुतिं चक्रथुः पुरन्धये ॥ ibid., X. 39, 7.

[5] ibid., I. 117, 24.

[6] ibid., X. 18, 8; 40, 2.

devara or husband's brother The phrase *devrkama* occurs in the sacred hymn which treats of the wedding of Sūryā[1] the daughter of the sun god Savitā It may also incidentally be suggested that the *devara* was normally looked upon as a possible husband after the death or in the absence of his brother and perhaps a second husband even during his brother s life time It may be noted here in this connection that almost all over northern India the *devara*, brother in law, and his sister in law, elder brother s wife, are socially free to cut jokes not always civil or dignified between themselves This would suggest the existence of sexual proximity of the two which when no more sanctioned in a later age is found to develope into hilarious expressions exchanged between them This point becomes very significant when considered along with the taboo that exists even to day against the husband's elder brother

Marrying only one wife was generally the order of the day, although we come across instances of polygamy very frequently As we shall see in due context, polygamy was not an uncommon practice and it was mostly obtaining among the military chiefs, princely families and the influential rsis But the masses, the common population called the *viśah* normally married a single wife There are references in the *Rgveda*, too many to be quoted here showing that monogamy was the rule and polygamy only an exception, although an abnormal exception freely contracted and extensively in vogue Monogamy however was the normal usage

Monogamy

The Yajamāna, sacrificer, appeared along with his only wife and not he alone but also the gods that he invoked came in single pairs The bride entering the house of her father in law as a worthy wife was asked to reign over the mother in law and the father in law and over the sisters in law and the brothers-in law[2] This was possible only if a single wife was

[1] *RV*, X 85 14
[2] ibid 46

the object of this address of the priest, for her authority in her new dominions which she acquired through marriage was uncontrolled and undivided, wholly absolute. The ideal was a 'never parting'[1] 'united pair'[2] 'sharing the same married pleasures,'[3] and the happiness of the married couple lay in 'the twining of their arms about each other'[4] and in 'each welcoming the love and embraces of the other.'[5] Except for a few exceptions we generally find the reference to the wife in the *Ṛgveda* made in the singular number.[6] The fond dame attires herself for her husband.[7] Gods Aryaman, Bhaga, Savitar, Purandhi give the only wife over to the husband to be the mistress of his household[8] (*gārhapatyāya*). It is a single wife that lies down by the body of her dead husband during the performance of the obsequies.[9] With a few exceptions, for instance the polygamous Indra, most of the gods—Varuna, Agni, Soma, Sarasvān—are married to a single wife.

This typical Aryan trait of monogamous marriage finds frequent mention in the *Ṛgveda*. But the prevalance of polygamy side by side would point to the weakening of the adherence to this earlier practice. It appears that the custom of monogamy slackened in course of time when the Indo-Aryan gradually embarked upon a career not only of colonizing the interior but also on that of spreading his culture among the aboriginies of India. It is significant that the references to polygamy are mostly found in those books of the *Ṛgveda* which have been declared by scholars to be of a later period. It is consequently not very improbable that when the Indo-

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[1] मा वि योष्ट *ṚV.*, X. 85, 42.
[2] समापो हृदयानि नौ । ibid , 47 ; cf. ibid , 23 and 27.
[3] ibid., 37.
[4] ibid.
[5] ibid.
[6] ibid., I. 124, 7 ; IV. 3, 2 ; X. 71, 4 ; 85, 36 ; 105, 8, etc.
[7] जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासा । ibid., I. 124, 7 ; cf. IV. 3, 2 ; X. 71, 4.
[8] ibid., X. 85, 36.
[9] ibid., X. 18, 8.

Aryan came closest to the non Aryan some of the latter s customs may have slipped into the social fabric of the former And in an age of struggle and strife the victorious leaders of the battle field are naturally tempted to appropriate to them selves the *belles* of the enemy Such instances are innumerable in the history of India down through the centuries It was as true with the Indo Aryans Śakas Huns Turks Pathans and the Moghals as with the Portugese, the Dutch the French and the British employees of the East India Company Most of the cases of polygamy as we shall see below are those of slave girls taken as additional wives and it is doubtful if really the free Aryan woman could have been induced to share the rule of the household with another save in very exceptional cases And it may be noted that allusions to polygamy are made mostly either to military chiefs or to intellectual aristocrats It may be doubted if such references have been made to ordinary citizens for whom monogamy always remained the ideal[1] as well as the practice

Polygamy

We have already mentioned above that instances of polygamy *are generally with reference to the opulent princes* their aristocratic nobles and their courtier priests Instances, of course are frequent and common a few of which may be quoted and discussed In a passage[2] a simile has been drawn from yearning wives (*patnīruśatī*) cleaving to their yearning husband (*patni uśan tam*) An interesting instance is contained in a verse in which the poet draws his simile from a man placed in a helpless and pitiable condition by his rival wives The evidence reads Like rival wives (*sapatnīriva*) on every side enclosing ribs oppress me sore [3] The distress of the poor husband hard pressed between his two jealous and quarrelling wives is comic if touching Indra himself is said to be revelling among his

[1] *RV* I 124 7 IV 3 2 X 71 4

[2] ibid I 62 11

[3] स मा तपन्त्यभित: सपत्नीरिव पर्शव । ibid I 105 8 cf ibid X 33 2

several wives[1] (*janibhiḥ*) like a king about which we shall refer at length below. Another passage refers to wives loving a single husband.[2] The hymn 62 of the *Ṛgveda*[3] presents us another instance of the plurality of wives. It says, "For many thousand holy works the sisters wait on the haughty lord like wives (*patnīḥ*) and matrons (*janayaḥ*)."[4] Again it has been mentioned that "Indra has taken and possesses all castles as one common husband (*patirekaḥ samāno*) does his spouses (*janīriva*)."[5] In another context we read the 'wives embracing their lord, the comely bridegroom.'[6] Yet another amusing instance is preserved in the simile of a verse which records: "Between both poles the car-horse goes pressed closely, as in his dwelling moves the doubly wedded (*dvijāniḥ*)."[7] A similar example is provided in the line: "He comes as the lord of women to the holy place."[8] The list of such instances is difficult to exhaust and only a few more may be quoted to illustrate the point. A verse reads as follows: "Alone the babe sucked many a teeming bosom. Guard, for the bright and strong the fellow spouses, friendly to men and bound to him in kinship."[9]

Another verse refers to the multiplicity of wives in the following words: "The chieftain of the mighty stride whose mother, the many young dames, who never disregard him."[10] The passage—"Those cows who yield unharmed, their nectar,

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1 राजेव हि जनिभिः क्षेष्येवावद्युभिरभि विदुष्कवि. सन् । *ṚV.*, VII. 18, 2.
2 उप प्र जिन्वन्नुशतीरुशन्त पतिं न नित्य जनयः सनीळाः । ibid., I. 71, 1.
3 ibid., I. 62, 10.
4 पुरू सहस्रा जनयो न पत्नीर्दुवस्यन्ति स्वसारो अह्रयाणम् ॥ ibid
5 जनीरिव पतिरेक. समानो नि मामृजे पुर इन्द्र सु सर्वाः ॥ ibid., VII. 26, 8.
6 परिष्वजन्ते जनयो यथा पतिं मर्यं न शुन्ध्युं मघवान मूतये ॥ ibid., X. 43, 1.
7 उभे धुरौ वह्निरापिब्दमानोऽन्तर्योनेव चरति द्विजानि. । ibid., 101, 11.
8 नयन्नृतस्य प्रशिषो नवीयसी पतिर्जनीनामुपयाति निष्कृतम् ॥ ibid., IX. 86, 32.
9 पितुश्च गर्भं जनितुश्च बभ्रे पूर्वीरेको अधयत्पीप्याना. ।
वृष्णे सपत्नी शुचये सबन्धू उभे अस्मै मनुष्येनि पाहि ॥ ibid., III. 1, 10.
10 उरुक्रम. ककुहो यस्य पूर्वीर्न मर्धन्ति युवतयो जनित्रीः ॥ ibid., 54, 14.

spouses of the far strider, ever young united"[1] —refers to the same practice A verse praises Vaiśvānara as 'celestial, truly mighty, most manly, having many a youthful consort '[2] Another indirect reference points to the same custom thus "For him they lengthen prayers and acts of worship, the mothers weave garments for him, their offspring "[3] A conclusive instance may be read in the verse "Rejoicing in the steer's impregnable contact, his spouses move on paths of heaven to meet him "[4]

So also is the text reading, "The maidens with lovely tresses hold him in embrace "[5] The term usually used for a co-wife is *sapatnī* of which frequent[6] mention is made The most convincing, vivid and conclusive evidence of the existence of polygamy is, however, furnished by hymn 145 of the 10th book The hymn itself is entitled "the Jealous Wife's Spell" (*Upaniṣat spatnībādhanam*) Indrāṇī is the Ṛṣi of this hymn who wants to eclipse the influence of her rival over her husband Indra The interesting hymn may be quoted below in its entirety —

1 "From out the earth I dig this plant, an herb of most effectual power,
Wherewith one quells the rival wife and gains the husband for oneself

2 Auspicious with expanded leaves sent by the gods, victorious plant,
Blow thou the rival wife away and make my husband only mine

3 Stronger am I, O stronger one, yea mightier than the mightier,
And she who is my rival wife is lower than the lowest dames

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[1] आस्क सपत्नी अजरे अमृक्ते सबर्दुघे उरुगायस्य धेनू ॥ Ṛl , III 6 4

[2] स्ववंते सत्यशुष्माय पूर्वीर्वैश्वानराय नृतमाय यह्वी ॥ ibid , I 59, 4

[3] नि तन्वते धियो अस्मा अपांसि वस्त्रा पुत्राय मातरो वयन्ति । ibid , V 47, 6

[4] उपप्रक्षे वृषणो मोदमाना दिवस्पथा वध्वो यन्त्यच्छ ॥ ibid

[5] नमस्युव केशिनी स हि रेभिर ऊर्ध्वास्तस्थुर्ममुषी प्रायवे पुन । ibid , I 140 8

[6] ibid , III 1, 10 , 6 4 cf I, 105 8 , X 145, 1 2 5 , 159, 5

4. Her very name I utter not: she takes no pleasure in this man.
   Far into distance most remote drive we the rival wife away.
5. I am the conqueror, and thou, also art victorious:
   As victory attends us both we will subdue my fellow-wife.
6. I have gained thee for vanquisher, have grasped thee with a stronger spell,
   As a cow hastens to her calf, so let thy spirit speed to me, hasten like water on its way."[1]

In a subsequent hymn[2] the same Indrāṇī under a different name, that of Śacī Paulomī, annouces the effect of the spell referred to in the hymn quoted above. Her rival was squashed and she gained the favour of her lord, Indra. The entire hymn is given below :—

1. "Yon Sun hath mounted up, and this my happy fate hath mounted high.
   I, knowing this, as conqueror have won my husband for mine own.
2. I am the banner and the head, a mighty arbitress am I.
   I am victorious, and my lord shall be submissive to my will.
3. My sons are slayers of the foe, my daughter is a ruling queen:
   I am victorious: o'er my lord my song of triumph is supreme.
4. Oblation, that which Indra gave and thus grew glorious and most high,—
   This have I offered, O ye gods, and rid me of each rival wife.

[1] The translation has been quoted from Griffith's *Hymns of the Ṛgveda*, pp. 386-87.

[2] *ṚV.*, X. 159.

5 Destroyer of the rival wife, sole spouse, victorious, conqueror.
The others' glory have I seized as 'twere the wealth of weaker dames

6. I have subdued as conqueror these rivals, these my fellow-wives,
That I may hold imperial sway over this hero and the folk "[1]

Thus we find that just as it would appear from other instances quoted above that in many cases the relations between co wives were happy, it would follow from the two above mentioned hymns that they were in certain cases strained as well In the present case the situation had become so very acute that one of the co wives had to take recourse to a spell and a ritual It is also clear from this case that polygamy as a custom had become so common that among those of a revengeful spirit need was felt for supernatural agencies through which to damage the fortune of an ascendant co-wife It is also probable that the two hymns cited above may have been later used as spells for the purpose by such co-wives as thought themselves eclipsed by the glories of those towards whom the common lord and husband appeared more considerate

Polygamy among kings, nobles and priests

Kings, nobles and their priests were mostly polygamous as we have already said above Cases of polygamy among them as also among the aboriginal non Aryan chiefs have been frequently instanced in the *Rgveda* [2] Indra, as shown above, has himself been several times alluded to as having a number of wives Kings, it appears, had a regular seraglio full of wives legally married as well as slave girls loosely so treated The evidence on the point is quite explicit as it says that Indra 'dwells among his wives in the manner of a king (*rājeva*) '[3] The

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[1] Translation quoted from Griffith s *Hymns of the Rigveda* p 398

[2] I 62 11, 71, 1, 104 3, 105, 8, 112, 19, 186, 7 VII 18, 2, 26, 3, X 41, 1, 101, 11

[3] राजेव हि जनिभि ibid, VII 18, 2, cf II 16, 3, X 95, 9

observation of Prof. Sarkar may be quoted here to elucidate the point. He says, "Apart from this possession of slave-girls, the princes had at least four principal wives recognised in regal ceremonial and rites, of whom the fourth, the 'pālāgalī,' seems to be a comparatively later development,—or to have been given a place in the ritual somewhat later—in the Brāhmaṇa age; the 'mahiṣī,' and the 'parivṛktī' occur from the Ṛgveda onwards; and though the 'vāvātā' first occurs in the AV., she is implied by the 'parivṛktī'; the 'pālāgalī,' wife of the king is an indication that it was a political marriage, and that daughters of other and higher court officials also were customarily taken into his harem from similar original motives; the first three designations are essentially relative, and pre-suppose a regular harem establishment, the members of which experienced constant rises and falls ('parivṛktī') in power at court ('mahiṣī') or in personal favour with the prince ('vāvātā'). *Such rise and fall is well depicted in the chief wife's song* of triumph, where she congratulates herself on the dawn of her fortunes, subjugation of rival wives and influence over the heroic lord with whom her name stands highest, and through whom she rules all the people,—on her son's rising to the rank of mighty warriors and daughters to that of princesses."[1]

Purūravā seems to have had other wives[2] (*kṣoṇibhiḥ*) in his harem besides Urvaśī, who had joined him as a wife or mistress in consequence of a contract. From the Puranic literature also we know that this king had more wives than one. Kālidāsa, while following the tradition, makes Purūravā in his celebrated play *Vikramorvaśī* a husband of many wives. The word *kṣoṇiḥ*, referred to above, has also been used in connection with Indra whose passion would not be in any way satisfied with women (*kṣoṇis*).[3] *Mahiṣī*, used several times in the *Ṛgveda*[4] implies chiefship of a particular wife over other wives

[1] *Some Asp. of the Ear. Soc. His. of Ind.*, pp. 87-88.
[2] *ṚV.*, X. 95, 9.
[3] ibid., II. 16, 3.
[4] ibid., V. 2, 2; 37, 3.

of a king. She is thus in effect the chief queen. The sage Kakṣīvān had married two wives,[1] both being Rājanya princesses as already cited in the last chapter. So also Cyavāna, an ancient Ṛṣi, is said to have married several wives[2] in his old age. Kakṣīvān himself was born of a slave girl and so were many other Vedic personages like Auśija, Kavasa or Vatsa.[3] These would be cases in point to show the prevalance of polygamy among priests and ṛṣis, for the slave girls must have been only secondary wives, mistresses kept in concubinage, as we have not a single instance in the *Ṛgveda* of an Ārya marrying a slave-girl when wedding an only wife. The custom was to marry an Āryā *and bring along with her several slave girls, who, when it suited* the pleasure of their Aryan master, readily became his wives. Of this we shall treat below. We find that polygamy was a flourishing institution not only among the Aryans but that it had also made a headway in the social usages of the non Aryans as well. Kuyava, a non Aryan chief, has two wives whom the poet denounces in a prayer and whom he desires to be drowned in the current of the Śiphā.[4]

Slave girls

We shall now consider the instances occurring in the *Ṛgveda* of slave girls taken in marriage as wives. We have no clear evidence, however, *to show that they were bestowed* on their husbands as a result of regular nuptial ceremonial as in case of the Aryan women. Thus it is not safe to say that they held in the Aryan household a status similar to that of the legally wedded Aryan wife. To the Ṛgvedic Aryan sacraments and rituals were necessary precedents to marriage and similar other functions and it is doubtful whether in their absence the sexual connec*tions between the slave girls and their Aryan masters could* have meant anything more than a loose concubinage. We have

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[1] *RV* I 126 3. I 51 13.

[2] ibid I 116 10. cf V 74 5. also cf I 117 13. 118 6. VII 68 6. 71, 5. X 39, 4.

[3] I 18 1. ibid 112 11.

[4] क्षीरेण स्नात कुयवस्य योष हते ते स्यातां प्रवणेशिफाया॥ ibid, I 104 3.

not a single instance where she appears along with her Aryan husband to perform *yajñas* or other religious rites. It appears that they were never ceremonially wedded to Aryans but when the latter married Aryan wives they also came in the train and while they were thus conferred over the husband presumably to serve his newly married wife all their life, they were styled as *vadhūs*.[1] This designation would confer upon them certain rights and privileges which may have been in most cases of the nature of those of a full-fledged wife. Now since they were termed as *vadhūs* they could be appropriated as wives. Their designation of the *vadhū* seems to have been meaningly used in which the idea of their being turned into wives by the master who held them was implied. And when they had already been bestowed on the husband in the capacity of *vadhūs* they were already his semi-wives, and therefore whenever he wanted to appropriate them he could do so without any demerit attaching to his act. The dignity of the wife rose at its highest when she became a mother. With her motherhood and the number of children her prestige also grew. Thus when the slave-girl was taken by her Aryan master as his wife her status at that stage must have been lower than that of his legally wedded Aryan wife, but once she gave birth to a male child and thus justified her new position her status shot up and came in level with her Aryan co-wife's. If it were not so, it is difficult to comprehend the nature of the status, rights and privileges of the mothers of Kakṣīvān, Auśija, Kavaṣa or Vatsa, all of whom had been slave-girls. It must be noted in the meanwhile that these names are great in the *Ṛgveda* and their bearers were the leaders of the society and models for men to emulate. They, being ṛṣis, were the keepers of the religious order,—the hymns were revealed to them, as though—and consequently nobody could have dared belittle their mothers or doubt their status as wives or mothers which must have been as high as that of an Aryan wife or mother.

[1] RV., I. 126, 3; V. 47, 6; VI. 27, 8; VIII. 19, 36; 68, 17.

Prof Sarkar remarks that 'the Vedic prince and his priest who could give and receive scores of slave girls as wives were no doubt living in an age of *flourishing polygamy*'[1] This observation is not much exaggerated and we have considerable data furnished by the *Rgveda* to bear this statement out to a great extent We read of several instances of slave girls being given away to husbands along with their brides in the capacity of so many wives (*vadhus*) We find that just as buffaloes, horses, camels and cows were presented to the priests and rsis by their royal benefactors slave girls with a view to serve as wives, *vadhūs*, were also given away[2] King Trasadasyu is mentioned to have presented to Sobhari Kānva fifty female slaves to serve as *vadhūs*[3] We read of chariots[4] full of such slave wives carried by Kaksivān on the occasion of his marriage as also by others

Thus it is clear that polygamy was a licensed custom *though not the common and normal form of marriage* which feature was that of monogamy alone In fact the social system evolved by the Aryan left little to be desired from a multiplicity of wives Where kindling of the domestic fire with faith and loyalty was imperative for the woman who thus prepared a clear way to salvation for her husband it must not have been a very affectionate desire on the part of the husband to court and marry other women beside her Still however polygamy being a feature associated with power opulence and luxury lingered or to a certain extent even flourished in the society

Two more points yet remain to be discussed in connection with marriage, namely the custom of polyandry and incest, of which we shall deal now in the following pages as their existence has been asserted by a few scholars with some vigour

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[1] *Some Asp of the Ear Soc His of Ind* p 85

[2] *RV* VI 27 8 VIII 68 17

[3] ibid, VIII 19 36 cf V 47 6

[4] उपमा श्यावा स्वनयन दत्ता वधूमन्तो दशरथासो अस्थु । ibid I 126 3 cf VII 18 22

At the very outset it may be observed that on both these points the evidence furnished by the *Ṛgveda* is meagre and mostly negative. And whatever references we have, are indirect. But these very allusions, howsoever meagre and indirect, warrant and establish the existence of both polyandry and incest, even though not as contemporaneous features, yet surely current incidents of a remote past. Polyandry is generally considered to be a non-Aryan custom, but from the references that we have, which we shall quote presently below, a contrary view is established. The evidence on the point is bound to be conflicting and inconclusive as the references to such cases are generally concealed in similes sometimes too vague to be understood. In the first place such references are about three in round numbers although they are mentioned twice and in certain cases even thrice in the same simile without any touch of originality. These references are made to three sets of gods, who in their physical sense are allied elements of nature. They are the Aśvins, Maruts and the Viśvedevas. These three groups of gods, specially the first two. signify natural phenomena of a very close type. Aśvins, the etherial healing physicians, the morning and evening twilight or stars, are twin gods attached to the sun and the moon. They are the groomsmen of Soma, the moon, and woo Sūryā, the daughter of the Sun-god Savitā for him. Several times they have been alluded to as wooing Sūryā or driving home with her, or competing in the chariot race of the gods for her hand, perhaps on behalf of Soma, the moon. In a passage we read: "The youthful daughter of the sun, delighting in you, ascends there your chariot, heroes."[1] Another records, "Then she also came for friendship, made of noble birth, elected you as husbands, you to be her lords."[2] Here the allusion sounds rather emphatic while giving a maid two husbands at the same time. Nevertheless, it may be noted that the same

Polyandry

Aśvins

[1] आ वां रथं युवतिस्तिष्ठदत्र जुष्ट्वी नरा दुहिता सूर्यस्य । *ṚV.*, I. 118, 5.

[2] आ वां पतित्वं सख्याय जग्मुषी योषा वृणीत जेन्या युवां पती ॥ ibid., I. 119, 5.

bride is united sometimes with Soma and at others with the Aśvins and *that the latter are inseparable twins and must* always be referred to as one and the same individual. Sūryā, the daughter of Savitā married to Soma, is perhaps the light borrowed by the moon from the sun which she reflects during night. This light is transferred to the moon through the evening twilight, which is the Aśvins, the bestmen of the bridegroom. The real bridegroom is the moon, Soma, and verse 9 of hymn 85 of the tenth book conclusively corroborates what has been pointed out above. It *runs as follows* :—

> "Soma was he who wooed the maid : the
> groomesmen were both Aśvins, when
> The Sun-god Savitar bestowed his
> willing Sūryā on her lord."[1]

The verse has been quoted from due context. It *occurs in the* the wedding hymns of Sūryā where the Aśvins are entrusted with the work of winning the bride for the principal wooer and escorting her home. Again in the hymn X, 39 addressed to the *Aśvins by the lady Ṛṣi Ghoṣā, a reference to the same theme is* made in the following words : "Whom, Aśvins swift to hear, borne on your glowing path, ye with your consort make the foremost in the race."[2] This also refers to the chariot race 'consented to' by the gods in which the Aśvins, Soma's groomesmen, succeeded in driving Soma's chariot fastest and consequently winning the hand of Sūryā for him.

Maruts, the foremost cavaliers of Indra's army, are the object of allusion in the following line : "Upon their car the youths have set the maiden wedded to glory."[3] In the two preceding verses there is a reference to a *sādhāraṇī* wife enjoyed commonly by the Maruts[4] and to Rodasī being devoted to

[1] *Ṛ.V.*, X. 85, 9.

[2] यमश्विना सुहवा रुद्रवर्तनी पुरोरथं कृणुथः पत्न्या सह ॥ ibid., 39, 11.

[3] आस्थापयन्त युवतिं युवानः शुभे निमिश्लां विदथेषु पज्राम् । ibid., I. 167, 6.

[4] परा शुभ्रा अयासो यव्या साधारण्येव मरुतो मिमिक्षुः ।
न रोदसी अप नुदन्त घोरा जुषन्त वृधं सख्याय देवाः ॥ ibid., 4.

her lords, the Maruts, like Sūryā to Aśvins.[1] Again in an address to the Maruts we hear, "Go, ye heroes, far away, ye bridegrooms with a lovely spouse."[2] Here the 'lovely spouse' is Rodasī, lightning wedded to the Maruts, who are the clouds. We know too well to be explained here the relation existing between the Maruts and Rodasī as between the clouds and lightning, and between Soma and Sūryā as between the moon and the borrowed light of the sun borne through the evening twilight, that is the Aśvins. Maruts in the singular number cannot be conceived by the imagination of a poet, who, when he looks up to the sky, finds a host of them, as it cannot be done in case of the morning and evening twilights, the Aśvins.

Viśvedevas and others

Viśvedevas, a host of gods are addressed in a hymn which appears to contain a reference to the custom in the line: "Two with one dame ride on with winged steeds and journey fourth like travellers on their way."[3] Although the *anukramaṇī* is silent on the point the above verse may have been meant for the Aśvins. We have a few more references[4] to a woman marrying more husbands than one and to fathers-in-law but these in their bearing and purport are as obscure and veiled as the above.

According to Prof. Sarkar the three previous divine husbands of the maiden, who are respectively Soma, Agni and Gandharva, actually point to the custom of polyandry, and they may "be best understood as a relic of a gradually disused custom of polyandry, which was transformed into an allegory, most probably representing the life stages of a maiden till marriage."[5] But this remark is hardly sound and cannot be

[1] जोषद्यदीमसुर्या सचध्यै विषितस्तुका रोदसी नृमणाः ।
आ सूर्येव विधतो रथं गात्त्वेषप्रतीका नभसो नेत्या ॥ *ṚV.*, I. 167, 5.

[2] परा वीरास एतन मर्यासो भद्रजानयः । ibid., V. 61, 4.

[3] विभिद्वा चरत एकया सह प्र प्रवासेव वसतः ॥ ibid., VIII. 29, 8.

[4] ibid., VII. 33, 13; VIII. 17, 7; X. 85, 37. 38; cf. X. 95, 12.

[5] ibid., X. 95, 12.

borne out by the evidence of the text by any stretch of imagination either directly or indirectly As has been observed elsewhere the three supernatural agencies presiding over the different stages of the girl's physical development are allegorical from the very inception and they fail to mark a transition from one custom to another Likewise two more points of the learned professor are open to grave doubt That the *matronymics*[1] point to the same direction is too feeble to be made a point of discussion here So also his suggestion that *niyoga* at some time or other was a general practice in the form of polyandry[2] cannot be seriously maintained

There is only one more point that needs mention in this connection It is the idea implied in the phrase *devrkama*[3] It is important that while the wife is in coverture, nay, when she is yet in the process of being married, she is styled as *devrkama*, desiring union with the younger brother of her husband It could have been easily explained away had the occasion been one of funeral or had the phrase been used in reference to a widow, but its use respecting a bride during her nuptial is rather perplexing It can be explained only with reference to a state of society in which all the brothers married a common wife, such reference pointing to a past period The marriage hymn in which the phrase occurs is made up of formulæ strung together which naturally were ancient and had come down to that age being repeated from very remote times on the occasion of marriage

Such veiled references, as noted above, however cannot be taken literally They seldom refer to similes drawn upon positive social habits of the people but they are natural and hazy pictures as they came to the physical eye of the Aryan poet accustomed to look upon the phenomena of nature with a reverential awe which he adjusted as similes to his metaphysical and very obtruse mystic conceptions And the efforts to look

[1] *Some Asp of the Far Soc His of Ind* pp 77 78
[2] ibid p 78
[3] RV, X 85, 44

for much material sense in them will not always yield the worth of labour.

Yet even these *indirect and indistinct references* cannot be dismissed summarily as barren and unmeaning. They have to be telescoped *with events fore and back to yield some sense.* After all, these are not absolutely isolated incidents in our traditional history. There are others as well of which the instance of Draupadī marrying the five Pāṇḍavas stands out conspicuously. No amount of explanation as given on the point in the great epic can convince a student of ethnology of its being incidental except as a makeshift and an after-thought. Then that which is most intriguing in the incident is the proximity of the father of the family, Pāṇḍu, who lived in the Himalayas, with the Tibetans, who are noted to this day to practise polyandry and whose practice of the custom has been impliedly noted in the term *Goyūthikam* of Vātsyāyana. We are sure of one fact only, which is that the evidence in the *Ṛgveda* is too scanty and feeble to establish conclusively that the custom was prevalent in the Ṛgvedic age, but that it does refer *to a stage however remote from the Ṛgvedic age when the* practice actually obtained but had become defunct in the period *under our survey.*

The most controversial point, that of the evidence on incestuous marriages, may now be considered. It is generally *believed that the Ṛgveda* knows *of no incestuous connections* and that its society was altogether immune from the influence of incest. But a close analysis of the small evidence furnished by the *Saṁhitā* on the point coupled with a searching reference to the Puranic traditions and the Buddhistic *Jātaka* stories alluding to conditions both prior and posterior to the incidents of the *Ṛgveda* leave no room for doubt regarding the prevalence of the custom at sometime or other in the Aryan society. By the evidence of the *Ṛgveda* itself and by that of other sources which we shall notice below it becomes manifest that the usage was not only

Incestuous marriages

considered unworthy of an Aryan but also that it did obtain in the society at sometime or other The custom may be studied under two distinct heads, namely sex relations of an incestuous character between brothers and sisters and parental incest We shall deal first with the former feature

Brother and sister marriage

The most outstanding evidence on the point is the dialogue of Yama and Yamī contained in hymn 10 of the tenth book of the *Rgveda* Yama and Yami are twins, brother and sister, and, says Professor Roth, "the first human pair, the originators of the race As the Hebrew conception closely connected the parents of mankind by *making the woman formed from a portion of the body* of the man, so by the Indian tradition they are placed in the rela tionship *of twins This thought is laid by the hymn in question* in the mouth of Yami herself, when she is made to say 'Even in the womb *the Creator made us for husband and wife*' " *Prof* Muller, on the other hand, says (*Lectures on the Science of Language*, second series, p 510) "There is a curious dialogue between her (Yami) and her brother, where she (the night) implores her brother (the day) to make her his wife, and where he declines her offer, 'because, as he says 'they have called it a sin that a brother should marry his sister Again, p 521, "There is not a single word in the Veda pointing to *Yama* and *Yamī* as the first couple of mortals, the Indian Adam and Eve If Yama had been the first created of men surely the Vedic poets, in speaking of him, could not have passed this over in silence See, however, the passage from the *Atharva-veda*, XVIII, 3 13, to be quoted further on [Revere once ye with an oblation Yama, the son of Vivasvat, the assembler of men, who was the first of men that died and the first that departed to this (celestial) world]"[1] The passage of the *Atharva Veda* cited in the above quotation would clearly show that the belief of the people during the Atharvavedic times was in favour of the twins being the first mortals, and

[1] Quoted from Muir, *O S Texts*, V p 288

the *Ṛgveda* itself in the hymn-dialogue of the twins hints at it.[1] Although side by side it seems to allude in a passage[2] of the dialogue to human society existing prior to Yama and Yamī.

Analysis of the dialogue

We shall now analyse the hymn itself. The ṛṣis as well as the deities of the hymn are the twins, Yama and Yamī, son and daughter of Vivasvān. In the opening verse the sister in passionate words entreats her brother to draw to her and to beget on her a son for their father, Vivasvān; but the brother repulses her advances in gentle speech. He says :—

> "Thy friend loves not the friendship which considers her who is near in kindred as a stranger.
> Sons of the mighty Asura, the heroes, supporters of the heavens, see far around them."[3]

This verse makes it explicitly clear that the merit of exogamous marriage had already impressed itself on the Aryans who had come to attach stigma to incestuous connections. The second line of the verse declares the sexual connection between the brother and sister as banned. This, however, also refers to its existence indirectly in times gone by. Yamī puts in another plea. She points out that the principles of law are meant for the mortals alone while it is an immortal seeking union[4] with him, her brother, but the latter retorts her attempting to show historically that incest has never been an Aryan practice. "Shall we do now," says he, "what we ne'er did aforetime? We who spake righteously now talk impurely?"[5] Here is an endeavour on the part of the composer of the hymn to show that the custom never existed among the Aryans which, when considered along with other data, falls to

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[1] एकस्य.........मर्त्यस्य—not the first born but first dead—*ṚV.*, X. *10*, 3.

[2] ibid., 4.

[3] न ते सखा सख्यं वष्ट्येतत्सलक्ष्मा यद्विपुरूपा भवाति ।
महस्पुत्रासो असुरस्य वीरा दिवो धर्तार उर्विया परिख्यन् ॥ ibid., 2.

[4] उशन्ति घा ते अमृतास एतद् ..ibid., 3.

[5] न यत्पुरा चकृमा कद्ध नूनमृता वदन्तो अनृतं रपेम । ibid., 4.

the ground Yami alludes to an earlier common notion of the people with regard to twins which sanctioned and praised their marriage and she even threatens Yama that in refusing her proposal he would be exposed to divine wrath and chastizement on account of his lack of respect for an ancient custom She threatens him —

> "Even in the womb of Twashtar, vivifier, shaping all
> forms, creator, made us consorts
> None violates his holy ordinances that we are his the
> heavens and earth acknowledge '[1]

Now since history does not bear Yama out, and since Yamī speaks of *extant ordinances in favour of incest between brother and sister*, Yama has no arguments but wrath in reply He answers —

> "Who knows that earliest day whereof thou speakest?
> Who hath beheld it? Who can here declare it?
> Great is the law of Varuna and Mitra What wanton!
> wilt thou say to men to tempt them? [2]

In reply Yami emphatically commits her love to Yama and declares it in the following words —

> "I, Yami, am possessed by love of Yama that I may
> rest on the same couch beside him
> I as a wife would yield me to my husband
> Like car wheels let us speed to meet each other '[3]

But Yama is conscious of the new ethical standard now obtaining in the society, and he warns her in the name of the watching sentinels of Varuna —

> "They stand not still, they never close their eye lids,
> those sentinels of gods who wander round us

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[1] गर्भे नु नौ जनिता दम्पती कर्देवस्त्वष्टा सविता विश्वरूप ।
नकिरस्य प्रमिनन्ति व्रतानि वेदनावस्य पृथिवी उतद्यौ ॥ RI X 10 5

[2] को अस्य वेद प्रथमस्याह्न कईं ददर्श क इह प्रवोचत ।
बृहन्मित्रस्य वरुणस्य धाम कदु ब्रव आहनो वीच्या नॄन ॥ ibid 6

[3] यमस्य मा यम्यं काम आगन्तसमाने योनौ सहशेय्याय ।
जायेव पत्ये तन्वं रिरिच्यां विचिदवृहेव रथ्येव चक्रा ॥ ibid 7

> Not me—go quickly, wanton, with another, and hasten
> like a chariot wheel to meet him."[1]

Then thinking him obsessed with the fear of breaking a recent principle of law and herself realizing the implications of transcending social laws—as she calls her proposal 'an unbrotherly act' (*bibhṛyādajāmi*)—Yamī in a fit of passion takes all the guilt that her brother would eventually incur upon herself and declares :—

> "May Sūryā's eye with days and nights endow him, and
> ever may this light spread out before him.
> In heaven and earth the kindred pair commingle.
> On Yamī be the unbrotherly act of Yama."[2]

In the verse spoken by Yama in reply to Yamī the existence of the custom either as prevailing in the contemporary society or in an age gone by the reminiscences of which are yet fresh in *the memory of the poet is clearly evidenced.* Says Yama :—

> "Sure there will come succeeding times when brothers
> and sisters will do acts unmeet for kinsfolk.
> Not me, O fair one,—seek another husband, and make
> thine arm a pillow for thy consort."[3]

The succeeding times have already passed by or are yet extant in the poet's generation. The future curse is in fact a reaction against the custom which had now been declared as bad and unwanted. In the following reply Yamī implies and perhaps alludes to an old custom when the brother was considered a natural husband of the sister, although the outward sense of the verse enjoins upon a brother to find a husband for his

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[1] न तिष्ठन्ति न निमिषन्त्येते देवानां स्पश इह ये चरन्ति ।
अन्येन मदाहनो याहि तूयं तेन वि वृह रथ्येव चक्रा ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 8.

[2] रात्रीभिरस्मा अहभिर्दशस्येत्सूर्यस्य चक्षुर्मुहुरुन्मिमी यात् ।
दिवा पृथिव्या मिथुना सबन्धू यमीर्यमस्य बिभृयादजामि ॥ ibid., 9.

[3] आ घा ता गच्छानुत्तरा युगानि यत्र जामयः कृणवन्नजामि ।
उप बर्बृहि वृषभाय बाहुमन्यमिच्छस्व सुभगे पतिं मत् ॥ ibid., 10.

sister and the latter to find a wife for the former. Yamī robukes Yama :—

> "Is he a brother when no lord is left her? Is she a sister when Destruction cometh?
>
> Forced by my love these many words I utter. Come near, and hold me in thy close embraces."[1]

And Yama, referring to the custom as declared sinful by the people of his age, replies :—

> "I will not fold mine arms about thy body: They call it sin when one comes near one's sister.
>
> Not me,—prepare thy pleasures with another: thy brother seeks not this from thee, O fair one."[2]

Then the sister, repelled in her attempts to exercise her ancient right, becomes righteously indignant and directly calls her brother a coward with no trace of heart or spirit. She throws out an impassioned inducement to Yama :—

> "Alas! thou art indeed a weakling, Yama; we find in thee no trace of heart or spirit.
>
> As round the tree the woodbine clings, another will cling about thee girt as with a girdle."[3]

The brother, adamant in his belief and action, feels the strength of his sister's arguments and of her right on his person as a twin, but reminds her of the implications of the breach of a newly introduced custom, and himself dreading the wrath of the elders in agreeing with Yamī's proposal, Yama in gentle compassionate words apprises her of the new standard of morals accepted by the society[4] :—

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[1] किं भ्रातासद्यदनाथं भवाति किमु स्वसा यन्निर्ऋतिर्निगच्छात् ।
कामंमूता बह्वे तद्रपामि तन्वा मे तन्वं सं पिपृग्धि ॥ *RV.*, X. 10, 11.

[2] न वा उ ते तन्वा तन्वं सं पपृच्यां पापमाहुर्यः स्वसारं निगच्छात् ।
अन्येन मत्प्रमुदः कल्पयस्व न ते भ्राता सुभगे वष्ट्येतत् ॥ ibid, 12

[3] बतो बतासि यम नैव ते मनो हृदयं चाविदाम ।
अन्या किल त्वां कक्ष्येव युक्तं परिष्वजाते लिबुजेव वृक्षम् ॥ ibid, 13.

"Embrace another, Yamī; let another, even as the woodbine rings the tree, enfold thee.
Win thou his heart and let him win thy fancy, and he shall form with thee a blest alliance."[1]

This hymn will amply prove that incest had once received the sanction and approval of the society which now was fast becoming defunct. We have two more references alluding to the same custom. Hymn VI, 55 of the *Ṛgveda* almost endorses incest.[2] The hymn X, 162 constitutes a charm for the prevention of abortion the fifth verse of which seems to refer to incest. The Ṛṣi says, "What rests by thee in borrowed form of brother, lover, or of lord, and would destroy thy progeny,—even this will we exterminate."[3]

Support of Puranic traditions

But the most convincing proof of the existence of incest between brother and sister which comes in aid of the evidence of the *Ṛgveda* is that of the Puranic traditions. It must be remembered that the Puranic traditions in most cases illustrate the condition of society prevailing prior to the Ṛgvedic. We know, for instance, that Trasadasyu-Purukutsa[4] and Yayāti[5] figure in the *Ṛgveda* as heroes of past whose exploits are sung in the *Saṁhitā*, but the Purāṇas open with their genealogical table and history even several generations earlier. Yama himself figures in them as a descendant and not as the first progenitor of a family. No less than two dozen cases from the Puranic traditions (so ably discussed in details by Professor Sarkar) may be cited to

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[1] अन्यमूषु त्वं यम्यन्य उ त्वा परिष्वजाते लिबुजेव वृक्षम् ।
तस्य वा त्व मन इच्छा स वा तवाधा कृणुष्व संविदं सुमद्राम् ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 10, 14.
The translation is quoted from Griffith's *Hymns of the Rigveda.*

[2] पूपणं न्व जाश्वमुपस्तोपाम वाजिनम् । स्वसुर्यो जार उच्यते ॥ ibid., VI. 55, 4; स्वसुर्जार: ibid., 5.

[3] यस्त्वा भ्राता पतिर्भूत्वा जारो भूत्वा निपद्यते ।
प्रजां यस्ते जिघांसति तमितो नाशयामसि ॥ ibid., X. 162, 5.

[4] ibid., VIII. 19, 36.

[5] ibid., X. 63, 1.

show the prevalence of incest both before and after the society envisaged by the *Rgveda* Save for a few exceptions all these allusions refer to instances in which brothers marry their own sisters, the father's daughters (*pitr-kanyā*)[1] And in these exceptions themselves brothers marry their half sisters or first cousins Vena's father Anga married his father's daughter (*pitr kanyā*) Sunītā[2] Vipracitti married his father Kaśyapa's daughter Simhikā Yama and Yami's generation comes in the tenth step after Anga and Sunītā as they are the children of Vivasvān, the step-brother of Vipracitti and Simhikā Manu, another son of Vivasvān, married Śraddhā, who is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*[3] as a daughter of Vivasvān Nahusa Aila, in like manner, married a *pitr kanyā* named Virajā,[4] who gave birth to Yayāti of the *Rgveda* Acchodā, a *pitr kanyā* of Amāvasu Aila, chose the latter as her husband[5] Śukra-Uśanas, who later became the father-in law of Yayāti, is stated to have married his 'father's daughter' named Gā[6] Devī, Devayānī's (daughter of Śukra-Uśanas) elder sister, married Varuna,[7] who, being an immediate descendant of Śukra Uśanas,[8] must have been either a brother, a half brother, or a first cousin Bharata, among the Angirasas, wedded his three sisters[9] Haimavati Drsadvatī, daughter of Samhatāśva, married his two sons Krśāśva and Aksayāśva Māndhātr's son Purukutsa, the same who figures in the *Rgveda*, married his *pitr kanya* Narmadā[10] Sagara's grandson Amśumat also is stated to have wedded his *pitr kanyā* called Yaśodā[11] Professor Sarkar suggests that

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[1] *Matsya Purana*, 1, 43 44, *Vayu P* II 93 12, etc

[2] In all accounts of the Puranas and epics regarding Vena

[3] XII 265, 9449, cf ibid, 4507

[4] *Vayu P*, II 93, 12, *Brahma P*, 12, 1, *Harivamśa*, 80 1599, *Matsya P*, 15, 23, *Linga P*, I, 66, 60 1, *Kurma P*, I 22, 5

[5] *Matsya P*, 14, 1ff, *Brahmanda P*, III 10, 54ff

[6] *Matsya P*, 15, 15, *Brahmanda*, III 1, 74 77

[7] *Mahabharata*, I 66, 2616

[8] ibid, XIII 85, 4149

[9] ibid, III 219, 14135 37

[10] *Matsya P*, 15, 25, *Brahmanda P*, III 10, 98

[11] *Matsya P*, 15, 18 19

Daśaratha married Kauśalyā who must have been a first cousin (paternal uncle's daughter).[1] From the *Daśaratha Jātaka* it follows that Rāma and Sītā were brother and sister and, may be, Sītā's appellation 'janaka-duhitā' was equivalent to 'pitr-kanyā.'[2] At this stage, it would seem, perhaps the Ṛgvedic society revolted against the custom and asserted itself, and incest fell in abeyance for a time because for about twenty-seven generations after Rāma we do not read of sister-marriages in the Puranic traditions. Later, however, the usage proved too strong to die out and once again it reared its head up during the *Mahābhārata* age. Śuka, the son of Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa, is stated to have married Pīvarī, who was his 'father's daughter.'[3] King Drupada likewise married his sister.[4] Satrājit was wedded to ten sister-wives.[5] Śrñjayī's son married two daughters of Śrñjaya.[6] Again Sātvata married Sātvatī, who must have been his kinswoman.[7] His great-grandfather was wedded to an Aikṣvākī and their son again married an Aikṣvākī (Kauśalyā).[8]

We may here add a few instances from Buddhistic traditions to show that even after the epic age the tendency did not die out but it tenaciously persisted until a much later time, instances of which are not absolutely extinct even now as we shall see below. A *jātaka* story[9] mentions Sītā, the wife of Rāma, to have been his sister, and, according to another, Kṛṣṇa's twin brother is stated to have married the daughter of his mother by her second

Buddhistic traditions

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[1] *Some Asp. of the Ear. Soc. Hist. of India*, p. 125.

[2] ibid., 126.

[3] *Harivaṁśa*, 23, 1242-3.

[4] *Mahābhārata*, 1, 167.

[5] *Vāyu*, P. 96, 53.

[6] ibid., 96, 2-6; *Brahmāṇḍa P.*, III. 71, 3-6; *Hariv.*, 38, 1999-2003; *Brahma P.*, 15, 30-34; *Matsya P.*, 44, 47-50.

[7] *Vāyu P.*, 95, 47; 96, 34.

[8] *Matsya P.*, 44, 45-47; *Brahma P.*, 15, 27-30; *Hariv.*, 37, 1994-2000.

[9] Cowell: *Jātakas*, IV. 79-82.

husband [1] Udayabhadra of Kāśi married his half sister Udayabhadrā [2] Among the Śākyas marriage with sisters had become a common feature and a recognised custom [3] Mahākosala, father of Pasenadi, king of Kosala, married his daughter Kosala devī to king Bimbisāra, and princess Vajirā, daughter of Pasenadi, was wedded to Ajātaśatru, her cousin [4] 'Limitations on marriage imposed by Brahmanic usage are conspicuous by their absence in Buddhist literature and even sister marriage is referred to' [5] Marriages between cousins were by no means unusual in the Buddhist period [6]

Thus we find that incest between brother and sister has been a conspicuous feature of the Hindu marriage since the Ṛgvedic and still earlier times down to the Buddhist period It is significant that it should have prevailed in both the solar and lunar races of the Kṣatriyas It is thus evident that the case of Yama and Yami occurring in the *Ṛgveda* is not an isolated example of it, and long before it, about ten generations earlier, its existence has been warranted in the same line of Kṣatriyas by the genealogical records of the Purāṇas Even now the custom has not wholly disappeared and may be traced in the *matula kanya* marriages of Maharashtra and south There preference is given to marriages between cousins, i e maternal uncle's daughter In face of these numerous data it will be futile to hold that incest is un Vedic [7]

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[1] *Jātakas* V 226

[2] ibid. IV 67

[3] ibid V 219

[4] Bimala Charan Law *Women in Buddhist Literature* p 12

[5] ibid p 1

[6] ibid p 2

[7] Here a very important point may be discussed which takes its rise from the numerous evidence cited above from the Puranic traditions Dr Pran Nath the distinguished Professor of Ancient Middle East History and Antiquities of the Benares Hindu University contributed a series of eight articles in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* (in the year 1935 in its several issues from July to November) entitled the Aryans Before B C 1000 Subsequently he published an allied paper entitled the Sumero-Egyptian Origin of the Ṛg Veda'

In very primitive times when the society was governed by a strong patriarchal system and when the number of women was small there were cases of incestuous connection between a father and his daughter and a son and his mother. A few of such cases have been warranted by the *Ṛgveda* which seems to preserve these instances with a sense of approval. Or, at least, it is certain that the Ṛgvedic poet could imagine with freedom such connections existing between a father and his daughter and between a son

Parental incest

in Vol. I, Part 2, of the *Journal of the Benares Hindu University*. In these contributions the learned Professor presented a unique and bold front by asserting that the *Ṛgveda* in its origin is a Sumero-Egyptian document. His conclusion has not been seriously challenged nor has it been accepted which shows that either it has been deliberately ignored or its strength has bewildered scholars So far as the present writer knows only one attempt was made in the next issue of the *Journal of the Benares Hindu University* to cambat the situation taken by Dr. Pran Nath, but it proved abortive as it did not even touch the subject seriously. The evidence of the Puranic traditions as marshalled into array in the foregoing pages and as ably detailed by Professor Sarkar in his work, *Some Aspects of the Earliest Social History of India*, pp. 116-185, supports Dr. Pran Nath's view to an amazing degree. We know that incestuous marriages between brothers and sisters were a peculiar trait of the Semitic races. They are even now so to a great extent. (This position is admitted on all hands). Such incestuous marriages are best illustrated by the social history of Egypt. There such marriages were a common feature. The ancient kings of Egypt always married their real sisters. Now, it is generally held by Ṛgvedic scholars that the composition and compilation of the hymns of the *Ṛgveda* were much posterior to the existence of the Egyptian royal family and to the erection of the pyramids. The Puranic traditions describe conditions and illustrate cases of a society which flourished at a period much anterior to the composition of the *Ṛgveda*. It is therefore easy to show, as has been done above, that the parallel cases of the *Ṛgveda* are incidents of generations figuring several steps later in the Puranic genealogical table. Yama of the *Ṛgveda* comes about ten generations later in the Puranic list and so do Yayāti and Trasadasyu-Purukutsa who thus represent a later period in the Purāṇas. The instances of incestuous marriages preserved in the Puranic accounts are in most cases of a time much prior to the *Ṛgveda*. And these instances are not a few but numerous, prolific. *In the Ṛgveda itself* the custom of marriage between brother and sister is so defunct that we get only three indirect references to it in its whole range. These themselves preserve only instances of a bygone age,

and his mother The former type is evidenced in the love and union of Prajāpati and his daughter[1] and the latter is evidenced in the example of Pūṣan wooing (*didhiṣu*) his own mother[2] The former case is substantiated by a few similar instances in the Purāṇas as well which do not fall within the province of our discussion The case of incestuous connection between mother and son may also be cited in one existing (at least so conceived by the poet) between Uṣā, the dawn, and Sūrya, the sun The dawn has been described as the mother generating Sūrya[3] and bearing him as her illustrious child[4] She is also

while those of the Puranas are numerous and come from still earlier times It is probable that the two sets of evidence belong to the same period of time or that the Rgvedic data are slightly later Thus it may be shown without fear of contradiction that both the *Rgveda* and the earlier accounts of the Puranas refer to conditions in an ancient society of the Aryans in which sister marriages were common and praiseworthy Now which was this society of the Aryans in which sister marriages were considered normal? It is here that the conclusion of Dr Pran Nath comes to our aid and solves the riddle Sister marriages are held as a distinguishing trait among the social habits of the semitic Egyptians It also prevailed among the early Hebrews and Arabs If we accept Dr Nath s conclusion that the Aryans were agnates to the Egyptians on whom the latter s social legacy devolved we shall have no difficulty in explaining the apparently un Vedic and non Aryan custom of sister marriage references to which are preserved in the *Rgveda* and instances of which are multiplied and detailed in the traditional accounts of the Puranas

[1] *RV*, X 61 5 7 *It is interesting to note the observation of Professor* Max Müller regarding this myth of Prajapati and his daughter He says When Kumārila is hard pressed by his opponents about the immoralities of his gods, he answers with all the freedom of a comparative mythologist It is fabled that Prajapati the Lord of Creation did violence to his daughter But what does it mean? Prajapati the Lord of Creation is a name of the Sun and he is called so because he protects all creatures His daughter Ushas is the dawn And when it is said that he was in love with her, this only means that at sunrise, the sun runs after the dawn the dawn being at the same time called the daughter of the Sun because she rises when he approaches' — *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, pp 529 30

[2] मातुर्दिधिषुं *RV*, VI 55 5

[3] ibid VII 78 3

[4] *ibid*, I 113, 1 2

referred to as the wife of Sūrya[1] shining with the light of her lover,[2] and being pursued by him as a young man follows a maiden.[3] She is constantly mentioned as the daughter of the heaven (*duhitardivaḥ*)[4] but at one place she is spoken of even as his beloved (*priyā*).[5] We have, however, no counterparts in the Puranic traditions of incest between a mother and her son.

[1] *ṚV.*, VII. 75, 5; IV. 5, 13.
[2] ibid., I. 92, 11.
[3] ibid., I. 115, 2; cf. I. 123, 10.
[4] ibid., I. 30, 22, etc., vide *ante*.
[5] ibid., I. 46, 1.

Chapter V

THE WIFE AND MOTHER

The free bold maiden, approached and adored by a crowd of young suitors, could not but be the cause of a little pride in her conduct. Pride to a considerable extent results in dignity and the Rgvedic wife who was first flattered with attentions and repeated visits by young men of promise and eminence was bound to be dignified and gracious when later wedded to an Ārya under the nuptial ceremonies to which Agni, one of the greatest gods of the Indo Aryan pantheon, was the chief witness. Thus the dignity of the wife which was to survive in the mother, the progenitor of the Ārya and a member of unique importance in the Aryan family, was recognised in the Rgvedic society. She was not only an auxiliary in the management of the household but the very centre of the domestic world and empress[1] (*samrajñī*) in her home. The husband identified her with his very home, his abiding hearth. "A wife, O Maghavan," says the great seer Viśvamitra, "is home and dwelling."[2] She is auspicious[3] (*kalyanī*), the most auspicious (*śivatama*)[4] who brings blessings and prosperity to the bipeds and quadrupeds[5] of her husband's household. Not fierce of eye

Wife her dignity

the priest sends the bride to her new home after blessing her, "no slayer of thy husband, bring weal to cattle, radiant, gentle hearted, loving the gods, delightful, bearing heroes, bring blessing to our quadrupeds and bipeds."[6]

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[1] *RV* X 85 46

[2] जायेदस्तं मघवन्त्सेदु योनिस्तदित्त्वा युक्ता हरयो वहन्तु । ibid III 53 4

[3] ibid 6

[4] ibid X 85 37

[5] ibid 43 44

[6] ibid 44

The wife was the perfect companion of her husband and it was one prayer of the Aryan to be wedded to an auspicious wife, who should be the sharer of his pleasures and who should twine her loving arms about him, and welcome all his embraces.[1] Indra after he has drunk the Soma juice need hardly be reminded to 'turn himself homeward (*astaṁ*) for his joy lay in his home, his gracious and auspicious wife' (*kalyāṇīrjāyā*).[2] After the liquor has had its full effect on the senses of Indra he becomes the charge of his dear loving wife. The poet regards him with apparent envy when he sends him to Indrāṇī: "Therewith in rapture of the juice draw near (*upayāhi*) to thy beloved spouse" (*priyāṁ jāyām*).

The Aryan combined in his person the traits of both a materialist and spiritualist. Later Hindu society compartmentalized life, as it were, and divided it into four periods most suited to the changing conditions of aging life. It was realized very early that man was not merely a being but a becoming, a fast changing complex and so the individual was provided with the activities suitable for his growing needs. This fourfold division, technically called the four *āśramas* in the life of a *dvija*, twice-born, which starved no sphere of human development and which developed later into an important institution, had its obscure beginnings in the *Ṛgveda* itself. Because we find that alongside the spiritual quest the Aryan sought his temporal beatitude as well. Domestic happiness and conjugal affection are the constant topics of allusion in the *Ṛgveda* and the seers of the *Saṁhitā* are not fatigued while seeking repeatedly the bond that binds them to a happy home governed by a contented wife. 'True to the kindred points of heaven and home,' the Aryan blended together his stern and austere duties to the gods and affectionate conjugal habits of the earthly

Domestic happiness

[1] तां पूषञ्छिवतमामेरयस्व यस्यां बीजं मनुष्या वपन्ति ।
या न ऊरू उशती विश्रयाते यस्यामुशन्तः प्रहराम शेपम् ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 85, 37.

[2] अपाः सोममस्तमिन्द्र प्र याहि कल्याणीर्जाया सुरणं गृहे ते । ibid., III. 53, 6.

home in a proportion that generated the habits of a most balanced life Such a life is reflected in a verse of incalculable social value "Close to her husband," sings the poet, "clings the wife And in embraces inter twined, both give and take the bliss of love"[1] Such a state of relationship also, by the way, reflects upon the character of the wife She could make her home a paradise only when she herself was guiltless and bestowed her affection unreservedly on her husband while the latter overwhelmed her with his meaning and undivided caresses The love of a married couple is undoubtedly an inevitable assumption but naturally a 'blameless dame'[2] (*anavadya nari*) was very dear to her husband and she could easily rely on the absolute fidelity of her spouse Nor was love an affair of the husband alone The strength and vigour of the wife lay in the power of her love and the man was considered singularly fortunate who, while leading home a vigorous wife, found her loving too[3] Such a wife was bound to be cheered as she came close[4] How much miserable the domestic life of a couple becomes when one of them cannot completely return the warm embraces of the other! One-sided love is a great danger to the established ethical habits of the society The Rgvedic priest was conscious of such a peril and it was his ardent desire to see his home deeply rooted in the love of a wedded couple He implored his gods to keep disaffection at arm's length and prayed to them So may the universal gods, so may the waters join our hearts, May Matarisvan, Dhatar, and Destri together bind us close[5] The cementing of the married hearts was considered the foundation of all worldly happiness arising from the domestic life and the sight of children This idea is brought home very graphi

[1] अयमिद्दा उ अर्थिन भा जाया युवते पतिम् । *RI* I 105 2

[2] पुर सद शमसदो न वीरा अनवद्या पतिजुष्टव नारी ॥ ibid 73 3

[3] वधूरिय पतिमिच्छन्त्यति यई वहाते महिषीमिषिराम् । ibid V 37 3 also cf ibid I 131, 3

[4] ibid V 37, 3

[5] ibid X 85 47

cally in the following blessing of the priest on the occasion of marriage :—

> "Happy be thou and prosper with thy children here : be vigilant to rule thy household, in this home.
>
> Closely unite thy body with this man, thy lord. So shall ye, full of years, address your company."[1]

The very ideal character of an Aryan wife has been brought out in verse 6 of hymn 86 of the tenth book uttered by Indrāṇī :—

> "No dame with ampler charms than I, or greater wealth of love's delights.
>
> None with more ardour offers all her beauty to her lord's embrace. Supreme is Indra over all."[2]

Nowhere can be found such an ideal in practice as one embodied in the lines quoted above. Here is a total negation of self on the part of a woman for the man she adores. She bares her heart and lays all its hidden treasures without any reserve at the feet of her husband. Here was a complete surrender which was thoroughly returned and likewise responded to by the husband. And in the absence of such a return there were undoubtedly chances of a foreigner making his unchaste advances on the unfortunate woman and thus vitiating the pleasures of a married home. Such a notion is hinted at in the line, 'This noxious creature looks on me as one bereft of a hero's love.'[3] Herein Indrāṇī referes to the liberty Vṛṣākapi has had the audacity to take with her person as one would take with a woman who has not a hero, i.e. a loving husband, for her protector. She further asserts that besides her husband she has her other protectors, for example her sons. Says she : "Yet

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[1] इह प्रियं प्रजया ते समृध्यतामस्मिन्गृहे गार्हपत्याय जागृहि ।
एना पत्या तन्वं सं सृजस्वाधा जिव्री विदथमा वदाथः ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 85, 27.

[2] न मत्स्त्री सुभसत्तरा न सुयाशुतरा भुवत् ।
न मत्प्रतिच्यवीयसी न सक्थ्युद्यमीयसी विश्वस्मादिन्द्र उत्तरः ॥ ibid., X. 86, 6.

[3] अवीरामिव मामयं शरारुरभि मन्यते । ibid., 9.

heroes for my sons have I, the Marut's friend and Indra's queen "[1] Similes—for instance, 'Loving the loving one, as wives their husband'[2]—are drawn commonly from sweet domestic relationship, between the husband and his wife In a passage we read the prayer: "May we once firmly cling to the favours even as husbands to their wives."[3] Another has, "Dawn, like a loving matron for her husband, smiling and well attired unmasks her beauty."

The wife had to perform duties which were both of celestial as well as terrestrial nature. Her religious duties were even more important than the secular ones Her principal function in the Aryan household was to keep the domestic fire kindled at all hours The various sacrifices were the chief visible forms of Aryan worship and they dominated the religious ceremonies of the society. For the purpose of sacrifices fire was essential; besides, Agni was one of the most important gods of the times. Agni was the priest[4] (*purohitam, ritvijam*) of the gods. It was through him that the Ārya had communication with other gods and so fire was to be kept constantly kindled And this duty of ever keeping the fire kindled in the family hearth was made the concern of the wife. It was the same nuptial fire which had witnessed her union with a new soul when this latter took her round it and which act gave to the ceremony of wedding its name—*parinaya* Macdonell observes "The *taking of her hand placed the bride in the power of her husband* The stone on which she stepped was to give her firmness The seven steps which she took with her husband and the sacrificial food which she shared with him were to inaugurate friendship and community. Future abundance and male off-

Her duties

[1] उताहमस्मि वीरिणीन्द्रपत्नी मरुत्सखा विश्वस्मादिन्द्र उत्तर ॥ *RV*, *X* 86, 9

[2] ibid, I 71, 5

[3] सद्दृत्सु ते सुमतिभि शतक्रतो स पत्नीभिर्न वृषणो नसीमहि ॥ ibid, II 16, 8

[4] अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम् ।
होतारं रत्नधातमम् ॥ ibid, I, 1, 1

spring were prognosticated when she had been conducted to her husband's house, by seating her on the hide of a red bull and placing upon her lap, the son of a woman who had only borne living male children. The god most closely connected with the rite was Agni for the husband led his bride three times round the nuptial fire and the newly kindled domestic fire was to accompany the couple throughout life. Offerings are made to it and Vedic formulas pronounced. After sunset the husband leads out his bride and as he points to the pole and the star Arundhatī they exhort each other to be constant and undivided for ever."[1]

Religious

Agni was one of her earlier symbolical husbands and he later presided over the rite of wedding when the bride took for her a mortal husband. Agni thus being the witness of the nuptial ceremony became almost symbolical of her coverture and auspiciousness, *saubhāgya*, and so the keeping up of the domestic fire meant the lifelong coverture of the wife. Such being the case, and further for the repeated use of fire in sacrificial worship the wife who was in charge of all domestic concerns, she had for her principal duty the keeping alive of Agni at all hours of the day and night. The wife, worshipping the various gods, has been frequently referred to in company of her husband: "The united pair, worshipful and righteous, waxing old in their devotion seek Agni together."[2] The Soma juice which gave colour to the eyes of Indra and strength to his arms had to be washed and pressed out by both the husband and wife acting with one mind, one accord[3] (*yadampatī samanasā*). The dutiful and sacred life of the couple is brought out in a most vigorous verse which reads as follows:—

> "Serving the immortal one with gifts of sacrificial meal and wealth,

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[1] *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 254.

[2] बृहद्वयो बृहते तुभ्यमग्ने धियाजुरो मिथुनासः सचन्त । *ṚV.*, V. 43, 15.

[3] या दम्पती समनसा सुनुत आ च धावतः ।
देवासो नित्ययाशिरा ॥ ibid., VIII. 31, 5.

> They satisfy the claims of love and pay due honour
> to the gods."[1]

Gods are constantly kept in mind and whatever the nature of engagements of the couple they cannot afford to lose sight of them. The verse admirably sums up the two complementary parts of life, the worldly and the godly. Immediately after the wedding, especially in cases of love-marriages, men and women forget all else in the drowning passion of their love. Married pleasures are apt to engross the couple and to render them forgetful of their duties to the society and to the gods. The Ṛgvedic seer therefore, conceding to them the enjoyment of the material luxuries and worldly pleasures, reminds them of their real duties which were extra-terrestrial. Claims of love and the aids to them are surely the needs of a householder but over and above these are his duties which draw him away from the essentially earthly engagements and join him to the more lasting ends of religion. The verse embodies a sense of middle course between the two extremes of lustful appetite and austere renunciation. The harmony of both the material and spiritual pursuits is well kept in view. It is significant that most of the sages of the Ṛgvedic times lived up to the ideal preserved in this line We know that most of the seers of the *Saṁhitā* were married householders enjoying the luxury of many wives, children, slaves and cattle. They were in most cases priests attached to royal courts and nobles. And yet their greatness in the field of religion and philosophy is a proved fact. It is generally held that the germs of all later philosophy and metaphysics of the Hindus may be traced in the *Ṛk Saṁhitā*. The conceivers and utterers of such truths—the contents of the hymns being held to have been revealed to them (*mantradrastā ṛṣayah*; *sākśātkṛtadharmāṇaḥ ṛsayaḥ*)—must need be men of great spiritual attainments. It may with great emphasis be said in reference to the life they led

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[1] वीतिहोत्रा कृतद्वसू दशस्यन्तामृतायकम् ।
समूधो रोमश हतो देवेषु कृणुतो दुव. ॥ *Ṛ V.*, VIII. 31, 9.

that 'they satisfy the claims of love and pay due honour to the gods.'[1]

The wife attended all the sacrifices in the Aryan family.[2] Her presence at all sacrifices instituted by her husband was essential. She appeared as the sacrificer along with her husband just as the gods invoked came in pairs to accept the offered oblations. The religious functions and sacrifices could not be complete unless they were performed by the wife and her husband together. This would show that the religious ceremonies which in later times were banned against the Hindu wife could be performed by her in the Ṛgvedic times in her own right. In conjunction with her husband she is the subject of common allusion in the *Saṁhitā* on the occasion of the religious functions. The ideal of Kālidāsa regarding marriage as embodied in his phrase *sahadharmacaraṇāya*[3]—wedding for the purpose of performance of the social and religious duties in company (jointly by both the husband and wife)—was literally realized in the Ṛgvedic society. Instances of the wife appearing at such an important occasion as the sacrifice may be multiplied innumerably from the *Ṛk Saṁhitā*. "Nigh they approach," says the Ṛsi, "one minded with their spouses, kneeling to him adorable paid worship."[4] Āṅgiras Kutsa praises Agni for having bestowed his blessing upon the pair, 'who with uplifted ladle serve him, husband and wife.'[5] In a third passage an analogy is drawn between women attending on their lord and the pair together performing the sacrifice.[6] We read elsewhere, "They gain sufficient food; they come united to the sacred grass and never do they fail in strength. Never do they deny or seek to hide the favour of the gods. They win high

[1] *ṚV.*, VIII. 31, 9.

[2] संहोत्रं स्म पुरा नारी समनं वाव गच्छति । ibid., X. 86, 10.

[3] *Abh. Śāk.*, p. 165; सहधर्मचारिणी ibid., p. 260; *Ku.*, viii. 29; सहधर्मचारिणम् ibid., 51: cf. क्रियाणां खलु धर्म्याणां सत्पत्न्योमूलकारणम् ॥ ibid., vi. 13.

[4] अधिद्वयोरदधा उक्थ्यं वचो यतस्रुचा मिथुना या सपर्यतः । *ṚV.*, I. 83, 3.

[5] उभे भद्रे जोषयेते न मेने गावो न वाश्रा उप तस्थुरेवैः । ibid., 95, 6.

[6] ibid., VIII. 31, 5.

glory for themselves "[1] Thus the importance of the woman is evidenced by the fact that her appearance at the most important occasion of the religious life of the Aryan, i e during sacrifices, was made imperative Such a member of the family must need enjoy considerable influence and status in the society

We shall now pass on to her worldly and domestic duties Bearing of male children was the main purpose of the Rgvedic marriage The end was both religious as well as temporal The wife was expected to bear heroes for the propagation of her husband's race as also perhaps for fighting his enemies Not so much for the purposes of inheritance as for the latter reason sons were needed This is why the Ārya repeatedly prayed for a pretty large number of male children The usual number prayed for was ten [2] Already a number of references has been quoted from the *Rgveda* to show an ardent desire on the part of the husband for having male children The wife in this way was even a political necessity and her influence must have grown rapidly in proportion to the number of her sons The idea of the woman's strength lying in her sons holds good in the Hindu community even now, although it seems to have come in vogue in the Aryan society very much earlier thanks to the political no less than to religious reasons In course of time when the former was no more a potent reason due to the settled condition of the country the latter alone survived and even gained ground It was this religious consideration which influenced the ideas of the later Aryan so much so that his progeny inherited the principle as an instinct The propagation of the race and more particularly the performance of the obsequial rites are the chief notions that govern the desire of the modern Hindu husband as it was the case with one of the mediaeval times, in begetting a son on a legally married wife, apart from the considerations of inheritance and the instinctive affection for a child of the flesh

Temporal

[1] *RV* VIII 31 6 7

[2] दशास्यां पुत्रानाधेहि पतिमेकादशं कृधि ॥ ibid X 85 45 etc

In the despatch of her domestic duties the wife ran to and fro. She was a busy matron *controlling her household* and looking after her charge. She was an 'honourable dame, a true active worker.'[1] First of all she was expected to attend on her lord[2] who was the *gṛhapati* just as she was the *gṛhapatnī*. The poet observes, "For many thousand holy works the sisters wait on the hauty lord like wives and matrons."[3] In her capacity as the *gṛhapatnī* she had the charge of the entire household, of the members of the family, the domestics and slaves and of the cattle and other animals. As soon as she became a wife she was exhorted to take charge of the quadrupeds and the bipeds of the new family and to bear a benign temper towards them.[4] She was expected to look after the needs and requirements of her parents-in-law, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.[5] Several times in the *Ṛgveda* Uṣā has been compared to a matron who makes life astir, carefully tending *everything*. "Rousing all life she stirs all creatures that have feet, and makes the birds of air fly up."[6] "She cometh like a matron waking sleepers."[7] Thus the wife, the mistress of the house, left her bed before all others and in the manner of Uṣā, who unlocked the bolts of the great eastern gate of the sky[8] to let in the light of the sun after the expiry of the night, she opened the door of her house, and sent out the members of her family, the domestic slaves and the cattle to their respective duties of the day. She was like a mother unto all life—human beings or animals—and so cared affectionately for it.[9] From

[1] शुचिभ्राजा उषसो नवेदा यशस्वतीरपस्युवो न सत्या ॥ *ṚV.*, I. 79, 1.

[2] जाया विशते पतिम् ॥ ibid., X. 85, 29.

[3] पुरु सहस्रा जनयो न पत्नीर्दुवस्यन्ति स्वसारो अह्रयाणम् ॥ ibid., I. 62, 10.

[4] शं नो भव द्विपदे शं चतुष्पदे ॥ ibid., X. 85, 43. 44.

[5] ibid., 46.

[6] आ घा योषेव सूनर्युषा याति प्रभुञ्जती ।
जरयन्ती वृजनं पद्वदीयत उत्पातयति पक्षिणः ॥ ibid., I. 48, 5.

[7] अद्मसन्न ससतो बोधयन्ती शश्वत्तमागात्पुनरेयुषीणाम् ॥ ibid., I. 124, 4.

[8] उषो यदद्य भानुना वि द्वारावृणवो दिवः । ibid., 48, 15.

[9] दुरोकशोचिः क्रतुर्न नित्यो जायेव योनावरं विश्वस्मै । ibid., I. 66, 3.

very ancient times, the *Rgveda* informs us, the matron had been entrusted with the duty of responding to invitations and attending the social and religious functions and festivities[1] Agni within the house has been compared with a faithful wife beautifying everything[2]

Conjugal relationship

The conjugal relationship and the domestic happiness which it engendered naturally was a matter of pride to the Rgvedic poet to which he makes a reference whenever an occasion permits A few comparisons may be cited "I invoke him," says the Rsi, "with the tenderness which a husband has for his wife"[3] Another passage has, "He invokes you and prays to you with the faith which a wife has in her husband"[4] A third invokes Indra to "accept our offerings, listen to our prayers, be to us what a husband is to his young wife"[5] Again the god is implored, "Love our prayer as the husband loves his wife"[6] The same idea is brought out in the line "Love our voices, as the husband loves the voice of a well beloved wife"[7] and in "Thou lovest us, as a wife loves her husband"[8] The mutual feeling of love between the husband and his wife was so deep that it permeated all the actions of the Rsi His prayers reflect again and again the pleasures of his wedlock and reveal his affection for his wife He repeatedly returns to the fidelity, charms and the love of his wife and draws his similes and metaphors from the sweet incidents of his happy home The busy movements of his wife he seems to see and her ringing voice to hear while crooning his prayers Her association seems to fill the ideas of the poet and her voice echoes and re echoes in

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[1] स होत्र स्म पुरा नारी समन वाव गच्छति ॥ *RV*, X 86 10

[2] Wilson *Rig Veda* Vol I p 179 v 3

[3] ibid III p 160 v 5

[4] ibid p 366 v 1

[5] ibid p 82 v 5

[6] ibid p 110 v 8

[7] ibid, p 184 v 16

[8] ibid, Vol V p 336 v 4

his tremulous notes. The poet seems as though he cannot grow out of his house and its governing angel, his wife. The hymns of the *Ṛgveda* abound in tender references to the wife and everywhere there bursts forth a passionate sympathy for her and a devout wish for her well-being.

The gambler's hymn

The wife with her love, fidelity and submission cast a very winning influence. Her silent suffering occasionally won back to her her distracted husband and to the latter his lost sense. Book ten of the *Ṛgveda* preserves a hymn which records the fate of a dice-blind habitual gambler, who kept present in the dicing hall at all hours like its prop, the middle pillar. The story is interesting and may be narrated here. The gambler was always transported with joy 'as the dice turned upon the table.'[1] The sight of the dice had the same effect upon him as the wine has over the drinker. He had staked all his property and finally his wife and now he bewailed the loss of her. His very loving and loyal wife suffered inwardly without a murmur or complaint all the indignities that he showered over her as a result of his extreme addiction to gambling. She never got vexed or angry but to him and his friends she was always gracious.[2] The gambler feels full the remorse after he has staked and lost her. "For the dies' sake" says he, "whose single point is final mine own devoted wife I alienated."[3] The jingling sound of the dice had so overpowered his sense of reason that even before his final folly his guilt had made his wife bitter and now when she had been thus staked and lost as chattel his mother-in-law despised[4] him and 'the wretched man found none to give him comfort.'[5] "As a costly horse grown old and feeble," repents he, "I find not any profit of the gamester."[6] His woe grows beyond

[1] प्रावेपा मा वृहतो मादयन्ति प्रवातेजा इरिणे वर्वृतानाः । *Ṛ.V.*, X. 34, 1.

[2] न मा मिमेथ न जिहीळ एषा शिवा सखिभ्य उत मह्यमासीत् । ibid., 2.

[3] अक्षस्याहमेवपरस्य हेतोरनुव्रतामप जायामरोधम् ॥ ibid.

[4] द्वेष्टि श्वश्रूरप जाया रुणद्धि ibid., 3.

[5] न नाथितो विन्दते मर्डितारम् । ibid.

[6] अश्वस्येव जरतो वस्न्यस्य नाहं विन्दामि कितवस्य भोगम् ॥ ibid.

description when he finds others caressing and taking liberty with his wife, when already he has been dispossessed of his riches,[1] and when he sees his nearest kinsmen like his father, mother and brother surrounding and renouncing him to his creditor with the words, 'Bind him and take him with you'[2] Not once but many a time he resolves not to gamble but he is in a genuine plight when he finds himself absolutely forlorn by his friends, the gamesters,[3] and 'when the brown dice, thrown on the board, have rattled'[4] he cannot restrain himself and runs to the gambling table 'like a fond girl to her rendezvous'[5] In course of four verses he describes the lure and attraction that the dice had to his society and the magical power and hold which it had over him in a language full of vigour and in a style peculiarly the author's —

'The gamester seeks the gambling house, and wonders, his body all afire, Shall I be lucky?
Still do the dice extend his eager longing, staking his gains against his adversary[6]
"Dice, verily, armed with goods and driving hooks, deceiving and tormenting causing grievous woe
They give frail gifts and then destroy the man who wins, thickly anointed with the player's fairest good[7]
"Merrily sports their troop, the three and fifty, like Savitar the god whose ways are faithful
They bend not even to the mighty's anger the king himself pays homage and reveres them[8]

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[1] अन्ये जाया परि मृशन्त्यस्य यस्यागृधद्वेदने वाज्यक्ष । Rv \ 34 4

[2] पिता माता भ्रातर एवमाहुर्न जानीमो नयता बद्धमेतम् ॥ ibid

[3] यदादीध्ये न दविषाण्येभि परायद्भ्योऽव हीय सखिभ्य । ibid 5

[4] न्युप्ताश्च बभ्रवो वाचमक्रतँ एमीदेषां निष्कृत ibid

[5] जारिणीव ibid

[6] सभामेति कितव पृच्छमानो जेष्यामीति तन्वा शूशुजान ।
अक्षासो अस्य वि तिरन्ति कामं प्रतिदीव्ने दधत आ कृतानि ॥ ibid 6

[7] अक्षास इदङ्कुशिनो नितोदिनो निकृत्वानस्तपनास्तापयिष्णव ।
कुमारदेष्णा जयत पुनर्हणो मध्वा सम्पृक्ता कितवस्य बर्हणा ॥ ibid 7

[8] त्रिपञ्चाश क्रीडति व्रात एषां देव इव सविता सत्यधर्मा ।
उग्रस्य चिन्मन्यवे ना नमन्ते राजा चिदेभ्यो नम इत्कृणोति ॥ ibid 8

"Downward they roll, and they spring quickly upward,
and, handless, force the man with hands to serve them.
Cast on the board, like lumps of magic charcoal, though
cold themselves they burn the heart to ashes."[1]

Again and again he resolves to refrain from the evil and repeatedly the sight of the seductive dice humbles him and breaks his promise. He plays with a vengeance. He plays and loses and plays again, and his loss exasperates him. He has lost all. He borrows and loses again. One dark night he completes his ruin. 'Mad with despair, distracted with terror, pursued by a creditor' he repairs to his house but its doors are closed to him. He knocks but they do not open, and he stretches himself on bare earth. The forlorn and wretched state of his wife makes him reflect. He thinks 'that other wives are happy, that other homes are fortunate!' The night brings in remorse but the dawn ushers in hope and as the day breaks he is seen again as ever bending over the infernal dice. He 'yokes the brown steeds again,'[2] as it were.

But at last absolution comes and the silent sufferings of his wife cast him out of the dull stupor he has been in when the priest opens his arms to take him in with his sane and sombre counsel :—

"Play not with dice : no, cultivate thy corn-land. Enjoy
the gain, and deem that wealth sufficient.
There are thy cattle, there thy wife, O gambler. So this
good Savitar himself hath told me."[3]

The duties of the wife were of course tender, though responsible, mainly pertaining to the family and the hearth. The duties of the husband and wife were different and distinct.

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[1] नीचा वर्तन्त उपरि स्फुरन्त्यहस्तासो हस्तवन्तं सहन्ते ।
दिव्या अङ्गारा इरिणे न्युप्ताः शीताः सन्तो हृदयं निर्दहन्ति ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 34, 9.

[2] पूर्वाह्णे अश्वान्युयुजे ibid., 11.

[3] अक्षैर्मा दीव्यः कृषिमित्कृषस्व वित्ते रमस्व बहुमन्यमानः ।
तत्र गावः कितव तत्र जाया तन्मे वि चष्टे सवितायमर्यः ॥ ibid., 13.

While the former fought and died in struggle and strife the latter applied herself to the more delicate and tender causes of humanity The tender traits of the woman were fully realized by the husband who took on him to brave all the rough and tumble of the hard life of a colonizer and prepared for her a bed of roses without thorns to tread and lie upon, although we shall see that it was not always a bed of roses that the wife trod and occasionally she ventured out in the open, assisted men in wars and battles and even fought and fell by them The wife of king Khela is said to have lost her leg in a battle field while fighting by the side of her husband The poet praises the Aśvins for having replaced her leg with an iron substitute in the following verse —

Some other duties

> "When in the time of night in Khela's battle, a leg was severed like a wild bird's pinion,
> Straight ye gave Viśpalā a leg of iron that she might move what time the conflict opened"[1]

It was a clash of two civilizations in which the Aryan wife must have had her share and we find that she actually had hers It was Inrdāni whose oblations made Indra glorious most high[2] and victorious in the wars On the call of a battle the hero took the aid of such stimulants as would make him ferocious and indifferent to pain He drank deep the Soma beverage which was poured by his merry wife[3] If the martial Ārya foresees the approach of his enemy translates Wilson and if the moment of combat has come let his wife accompanied by those who pour the Soma give orders that this generous liquor be prepared[4] Indrāni the powerful and proud wife of Indra, declares "All women are charmed by the courage and glory of the husbands who love them A beautiful bride

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[1] चरित्रं हि वेरिवाच्छेदि पर्णमाजा खेलस्य परितक्म्यायाम् ।
सद्यो जङ्घामायसीं विश्पलायै धने हिते सर्तवे प्रत्यधत्तम् ॥ *RV* I 116 15 cf ibid I 112 10 as also ibid X 102 2

[2] येनेन्द्रो हविषा कृत्व्यभवद्द्युम्न्युत्तमः । ibid 159 4

[3] ibid 86 15

[4] Wilson *Rig Veda* Vol III p 169 v 8

is happy, when she gives public homage to her well-beloved."[1] "Women appeared as the worthy companion of the hero," writes Bader in her inimitable style, "and the Ārya excited himself to valorous deeds by the thought of her who after the victory would proudly lean on his victorious arm."[2]

The mother outlived the wife. The latter reached the climax of her power and importance when she became a mother. *Mātṛ*[3] is the term by which she is expressed in the *Ṛgveda*. Surely her high status and importance may be realized from the fact that *mātarā*[4] alone was enough to signify both parents.

Mother

We find that whenever she is spoken of along with the father her name begins the compound, for example *mātarā-pitarā* and *mātā-pitaraḥ*.[5] The use of the metronymics in the *Saṁhitā*[6] may point to the same idea. As we have already mentioned the importance of the mother grew in proportion to the number of children she bore. Parśu, the daughter of Manu, is lauded by Indrāṇī, for having borne a score of children at a birth. 'Her portion,' says the poetess, 'verily was bliss although her burthen caused her grief.'[7] According to Indrāṇī the mother of a son deserved honour[8] and she was actually much venerated in the society.

The Aryan was naturally very respectful towards his progenitors and this trait endures to this day. "Spare both him and her," prays the seer, "who have given no birth, O Rudra; abstain from striking the persons who are dear to us."[9] We have already discussed in the opening chapter of this work

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1 ibid., Vol. VI, p. 69, v. 12.

2 *Women in Ancient India*, p. 49.

3 *ṚV.*, X. 18, 11.

4 ibid., III. 33, 3; VII. 2, 5.

5 ibid., IV. 6, 7.

6 ibid., I. 147, 3; 152, 6; 158, 6; IV. 4, 13; cf. VI. 10, 2.

7 पर्शुर्ह नाम मानवी साकं ससूव विंशतिम् ।
भद्रं भल त्यस्या अभूद्यस्या उदरमामयद्विश्वस्मादिन्द्र उत्तरः ॥ ibid., X. 86, 23.

8 Wilson: *Rig-Veda*, Vol. VI. p. 234, v. 10.

9 ibid., Vol. I. p. 307, v. 7.

the motherly traits of the goddesses Here a few more references may be added to bring out the degree of reverence in which the mother was held and the attachment which the Aryan child bore to her The wife considered her domestics as her sons and we read · "Her servants are like sons brought up in the same house, and whom a virtuous wife as well as her husband cherish equally."[1] The child in distress prays to Aditi, "May Aditi receive me as a mother receives her son and may my prayer go straight to her heart to abide there "[2] "As mothers care for their nurselings," says the poet, "so do Heaven and Earth follow thee with solicitude, O vigorous and redoubtable Indra !"[3] "The generous and magnificent Soma, unites himself as tenderly to the waters, as a nurseling attaches itself to its mother "[4] Then we have lines like "sporting like young children under the eye of a good mother,"[5] "Like children who submit themselves to their mother,"[6] "O Earth, cover him, as a mother covers her infant with the skirts of her garment "[7] It was the function of the mother to adorn her daughter for *finding a husband*[8] She *even controlled the marriage of her* daughter as we have seen before in the case of the queen of Rathaviti While living, the Aryan looked to his mother for his strength and when dead, he sought the shelter of her lap, the touch of which he considered as soft as that of wool The priest addresses the remains of the dead body of a warrior

> "Betake thee to the lap of earth the mother, of earth far spreading, very kind and gracious
> Young dame, wool soft unto the guerdon giver, may she preserve thee from Destruction's bosom '[9]

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[1] Wilson . *Rig Vela* Vol I p 195 v 8
[2] ibid , Vol III p 803, v 2
[3] ibid , Vol V p 202, v 6
[4] ibid , p 362 v 2
[5] ibid VI p 211, v 6
[6] *ibid* , *Vol III p* 421 v 8
[7] माता पुत्र यथा सिचाभ्येन भूम ऊर्णुहि ॥ *RV* , X 18 11
[8] शुसङ्काशा मातृमृष्टेव योषा ॥ ibid I 123 11
[9] उपसर्प मातर भूमिमेतामुरुव्यचस पृथिवी सुशेवाम् ।
ऊर्णम्रदा युवतिर्दक्षिणावत एषा त्वा पातु निर्ऋतेरुपस्थात् ॥ ibid , 10

And then he implored the mother Earth:

> "Heave thyself, Earth, nor press thee downward heavily:
> afford him easy access, gently tending him.
> Earth, as a mother wraps her skirt about her child,
> so cover him."[1]

We now pass on to consider the status, legal and otherwise, of the wife, mother and widow. Already we have discussed in detail in the second chapter of this work the legal status, rights and privileges of the daughter. With regard to her there is some evidence, although scanty, which throws enough light on her status, but with that to the wife, mother or widow, we have not the slightest evidence on which to build up some facts showing her proprietory rights in the ancestral land and her inheritance of other property. Although we read in a passage of a partition made by a father of his property[2] yet it is absolutely silent as regards a possible share given to his wife or his own share being reserved for his widow at his death if she happened to survive him and chose not to remarry. Thus the data with regard to her inheritance are negative. We have nothing on record to show that the wife retained the items of dowry for her own distinct use although it is possible, as remarked elsewhere, that they might have formed her *strīdhana*. We learn from the instance of Śaśīyasī[3] that women could at times give away much wealth as presents or alms, but again we are not sure if this right was one incidental to love and as a concession made to the wife by her husband or it was a property owned by the wife in her own right. Normally, it would seem, that the wife could not inherit or hold property. Thus the legal status of the Aryan woman was not as high as that of the Egyptian one during the time of Ankhesnefer-abra, who died before the conquest of Combyses, and "with

Legal Status of Wife

[1] उच्छ्ञ्चस्व पृथिवि मा निबाधथाः सूपायनास्मै भव सूपवञ्चना ।
माता पुत्रं यथा सिचाभ्येनं भूम ऊर्णुहि ॥ *ṚV.*, I. 123, 11

[2] वि त्वा नरः पुरुत्रा सपर्यन्पितुर्न जिव्रेर्वि वेदो भरन्त ॥ ibid, 70, 5.

[3] ibid., V. 61, 10.

her closes the most extraordinary history of the legal status of a country's womankind that the world has ever known'

The husband seems to have been the master of his wife's person He had complete control over her and we find that the germs of Manu's *pradanam svamyakaranam*[1] and Kālidāsa's *Upapanna hi dareśu prabhuta sarvatomukhi*[2] may be traced to the *Rgveda* itself It is possible that the earlier usage of the patriarchal society had not become quite defunct in this age and women in certain cases were regarded as chattels Such cases must be taken as exceptional, for in the whole range of the *Rgveda* there is only one reference in the gambler's hymn[3] where a wife has been actually staked as chattel and lost But there too the wife, thus lost, is again referred to in verse 13, if it is not another wife (which does not seem probable from the gambler's feeling of loss in his staked wife), as waiting to be reclaimed along with his property[4]

Social

The wife thus staked seems to have become the property of the winner and served him as his wife for the text says "Others caress the wife of him whose riches the die hath coveted'[5] Still it would appear that the wife stayed in the house of her winner only for a short time may be in the fulfilment of a stipulation as we read in the verse alluded to above the following idea There are thy cattle there thy wife, O gambler,'[6] which clearly shows that after some time the wife reverted to her original husband Nevertheless the idea of her being caressed and fondled by another man in the interim is indeed revolting and point to the complete authority of the husband over his wife But this solitary instance may not

[1] *Manusmrti* V 152

[2] *Abhi Śak* V 26

[3] *RV* X 34 2, 4

[4] तत्र गाव कितव तत्र जाया तन्मे वि चष्टे सवितायमर्य ॥ ibid, 13

[5] अन्ये जायां परि मृशन्त्यस्य ibid 4

[6] ibid, 13

be taken as an evidence showing the existence of the usage in the society but as an abnormal and uncommon relic of a remote past. We may here refer to a remark made by Dr. A. S. Altekar on the point. He observes, "In India too in very early *times* women were *regarded* as chattel. They were given away as gifts in the Vedic age, as would appear from several hymns, which glorify the gifts of generous donors."[1] It is hardly possible to agree with the latter part of Dr. Altekar's observation. Unfortunately he does not cite the many verses to which he refers as *containing allusions to gifts of women.* We have, however, collected together and discussed all these references in our chapter on marriage. It may be submitted that none of these references allude to free Aryan women but to female slaves. It must be noted that since these women were given as absolute gifts and were classed along horses, cows and chariots, their status must have been lower than that of the real bride. Besides, the population of women was decidedly smaller than that of men as it was one desire on the part of the latter to beget ten sons on their wives. Again these possessions, i.e. women, of the kings and nobles must not have been free women. They were therefore slave girls. Female slaves, as other items of property, were a marked feature of the dowry or wealth given to the bride or the bridegroom.[2] These slaves were the aboriginal women captured in war, for they formed commonly part of the non-Aryan armies. There are several references to these being given away by kings and nobles to their priests and to others which we have already discussed at length elsewhere.[3] The view taken by the learned scholar has been evidently occasioned by the occurrence of the phrase *vadhūmanto* in the passage.[4] The context is the marriage of Kakṣivān Pajriya with the daughter of Svanaya and the

[1] *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation*, p. 253.

[2] *ṚV.*, VIII. 19, 36; 68, 17; V. 47, 6; VI. 27, 8; I. 126, 3; VII. 18, 22; This point has already been elaborated elsewhere. Vide *ante.*

[3] Vide *ante.*

[4] *ṚV.*, I. 126, 3.

grand daughter of king Bhāvya On this occasion the king is said to have given away to the bridegroom hundreds of horses, ornamented with gold coins, hundreds of cows and chariots full of *vadhūs* along with the bride [1] The term *vadhū* is easily misleading as it normally means a bride legally marriageable or a wife It may be remembered that the female slaves, who were given away along with the Aryan bride, could make legal wives without marriage They were given away with that appellation so that they might be appropriated without any further nuptial *formalities and could be made to serve their Aryan* master as his wives at his pleasure This is what is implied by the term *vadhū* It was out of such legally sanctioned riteless wedlocks of the Aryan fathers and slave mothers that some prominent Vedic personages like Kakṣivān, Auśija, Kavasa or Vatsa were born It would be hardly reasonable to believe that in those days of dearth of free Aryan women, when polygamy itself was *only a privilege and luxury of the few, chariots* full of brides could be given away freely The reference to *vadhūs* in Dr Altekar's citation is to slave girls who were the spoils of war And it may reasonably be held that free Aryan ladies could never be given away as chattel except in very exceptional cases of which we have a solitary, partial and doubtful instance furnished by the *Ṛgveda*, X 34, 2 and 4

There is no doubt about the fact, nevertheless, that the husband had complete mastery over his wife as already mentioned The wife surely was dependent on man to a great extent even at *that period when woman was kept comparatively in high honour* The gambler's case itself, howsoever exceptional may prove it The unfortunate habit of gambling among royal personages of the epics which marred the virtues and eclipsed the brightness of many a royal court, and caused even the most truthful and righteous Yudhisthira to stake his own dear consort, had its inauspicious beginning in the Ṛgvedic age or still earlier, and the 'dice blinded' reaped no better consequences than the one

[1] *ṚV*, I 126, 2 3

during the epic age. The gambler's hymn refers to royal personages also being addicted to the vice and respecting the institution of gambling, for the gambler says, "They bend not even to the mighty's anger: the king himself pays homage and reveres them."[1]

Female slaves

The slave women could always be freely given away as chattel in gifts.[2] These women were undoubtedly non-Aryan for it is absolutely incredible that Aryans were sold in slavery. The very fact that the Aryans were ever fighting in the enemy's land shows that their soldiers, always ready for war, did not encumber themselves with too many women. Thus the possibility of men being outnumbered by women seems to have been remote. And Trasadasyu, a mighty and benevolent king in peace and a turbulent leader in war who is credited with having given away fifty female slaves,[3] may have captured them in war from the enemy's camp or cities. Then we must remember that there would have been a good number kept at home to allow fifty such slaves to be given away in charity. Such a good number cannot be imagined to have been of Aryan extraction so useless as to be captured and then thrown away in miserable slavery. These female slaves therefore must have been women of the aborigines, captured and enslaved, who very often made war upon their enemies, the Aryans, with their women utilized as soldiers trained for the purposes of war. A verse of the *Ṛgveda* records, "Women for weapons hath the Dāsa taken. What injuries can his feeble armies do me?"[4] In Vṛtra's army his mother Dānu is also described to have fought Indra and to have fallen by the side of her son smitten by the thunderbolt of Indra.[5] There is no direct reference

[1] उग्रस्य चिन्मन्यवे ना नमन्ते राजा चिदेभ्यो नम इत्कृणोति ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 34, 8.

[2] ibid., I. 126, 3; V. 47, 6; VI. 27, 8; VII. 18, 22; VIII. 19, 36; 68, 17.

[3] अदान्मे पौरुकुत्स्यः पञ्चाशतं त्रसदस्युर्वधूनाम् । ibid., VIII. 19, 36.

[4] दासपत्नीरहिगोपा अतिष्ठन्निरुद्धा आपः पणिनेव गावः । ibid., I. 32, 11.

[5] उत्तरा सूरधरः पुत्र आसीद्दानुः शये सहवत्सा न धेनुः ॥ ibid., 9.

inherit it. But in other social respects she had no disabilities and she was treated in household matters with due deference. The bride, as soon as she attained to the status of wife, assumed the dignity and power of an affectionate and kind ruler looking after the benefit of the individual members and of the household as a whole. She was thus a true *sahadharmiṇī* of her husband and shared equally with him the responsibilities and the spiritual views and vows of the community.

She had a right to grumble and protest and she could rais her voice against her troubles. She was not the meek creature o the later times or that of other races of the contemporary world Even if it be a fact, as we have shown it was, that her right dignity and greatness were recognised in theory, easily sh will rank high among the women of other races of her contem porary times. For, as we know, women of other ancient races even of the other stalks of the Aryan race itself, have suffere legal inequities and social discomfitures to an enormous degree and to them freedom has been unknown through the ages The shackles on the rights of women in so enlightened a countr as England could be removed only so late as the last century and in other countries of the continent the removal of women' disabilities is an event of yesterday. The Ṛgvedic wife ha her equality with her husband recognised by the society i theory and in social and religious matters she was his equa even in practice. In the matters of the management of th household, as we have already mentioned, she was all-supreme and there it seems to have been her voice that mostly prevailed In later times the Aryan wife became a play-thing, a non-indivi dual creature, living not as an end unto herself but unto another i.e. her husband. Her sacrifice and self-chosen suffering wer not proportionately remunerated and returned by her sel seeking husband who took advantage of her ungrunting state The Smṛtis prescribed laws for her submissive conduct to he husband and lord. She obeyed ungrudgingly. They com manded her to identify her life with his ; she went a step furthe

and identified her death with his But her Rgvedic sister had a tongue and could wield it She had an invincible personality, a distinct individuality apart from her husband's She could assert herself and could remonstrate against the failings of her husband And she made herself heard The invalidity of her man brought forth a protest from her but she showered her congratulations upon his restoration to strength and manhood It has been said

> "What time her husband's perfect restoration to his lost
> strength and manhood was apparent,
> His consort Śaśvati with joy addressed him,
> Now art thou well, my lord, and shalt be happy "[1]

She was thus not a burden but strength to her husband, who treated her almost as an equal

But sunshine has its shadows as well and the Rgvedic picture also has its dark patches We read a few uncharitable remarks regarding women A passage, which we have already quoted elsewhere, asserts that many a maiden was an object of adoration to her wooer for the sake of her admirable riches [2] Another records dissatisfaction over the indiscipline and the small intellect of

The other side of the picture

women It says, ' Indra himself hath said the mind of women brooks not discipline Her intellect hath little weight "[3] A third is even more vehement in its denunciation of women "With women," says the Rsi, "there can be no lasting friendship hearts of hyenas are the hearts of women '[4] This statement comes as a sort of confession as it is put in the mouth of a woman herself But fortunately it is spoken by Urvaśi, a courtesan (*apsaras*) and courtesans are proverbially known to

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[1] अन्वस्य स्थूर ददृश पुरस्तादनस्थ ऊरुरवरम्बमाण ।
शश्वती नार्यभिचक्ष्याह सुभद्रमर्य भोजन बिभर्षि ॥ *RV* VIII 1, 34

[2] ibid , X 27 12

[3] इन्द्रश्चिद्घा तदब्रवीत्स्त्रिया अशास्य मन । ibid , VIII 33 17

[4] न वै स्त्रैणानि सख्यानि सन्ति सालावृकाणा हृदयान्येता ॥ ibid X 95, 15

love riches and wealth more than the person from whom they come. In the present incident the lover, King Purūravā, had entered into an agreement with the *apsarā* to live with her until the expiry of a term of stipulation at the end of which his contractual wife left him. The lover, infatuated by her charms and the pleasures her association had given him for a time, endeavoured to move her by threatening to destroy his life in her absence and the remark, cited above, is one she made in reply to his contemplated threat. Another reference, however, admits that many a woman is better than the godless and the niggardly man.[1] But this itself talks of women as being godly and generous with some reservation, and then we must remember that this remark is expressed by a man who has been immensely obliged by a woman (of whose bounties he speaks) through her rich largesses to him. This passage, in short, is part of a panegyric.

We shall have thus to admit that the woman who was an object of great honour was also maltreated sometimes by man. This trait is not, however, peculiar to the Ṛgvedic community. Every society, whether ancient or modern, civilized or uncivilized, has its quota of bad men and vile women, of villains and harlots. The domestic sourness is not the evil of a particular community. It is a failing of man; and likes and dislikes, loves and hatreds, friendships and enmities are the incidents of human nature. And, as such, the Ṛgvedic community had its share of unmanly men and unwomanly women. The disparaging remarks, cited above, are but the outbursts of casual passion and they refer only to individual cases. In spite of these shortcomings of the Aryan life it can be said with unquestionable certainty that the domestic life was happy and contented where the husband cared for the feelings and sought for the satisfaction of his wife while the latter in her turn attended on him well and ministered to the needs and happiness of all those left to her charge inclusive

[1] उत त्वा स्त्री शशीयसी पुंसो भवति वस्यसी । *ṚV.*, V. 61, 6.

of the bipeds and the quadrupeds The wife thus contented by the authority she wielded in her house laid all that was hers at the feet of her master,[1] and did all to afford him the greatest degree of satisfaction when she waited lovingly on him having decked her beautiful person with all the aids of winning charms Happy, contented mothers with their babes reposing soundly in their arms attracted many a poet to draw similes upon them [2] The child in distress cried in grief to be restored to his dear loving mother · "Who shall to mighty Aditi restore us, that I may see my father and mother?"[3] We have an example of the affection existing between the mother and son in a passage wherein the mother kisses him and he returns her kiss.[4]

In the free Aryan community life was gay and variegated. Men and women, as husbands and wives, strove side by side, fought shoulder to shoulder in the struggle of life and recounted their shortcomings to their gods while kneeling knee to knee It was a life of peace and plenty where the woman and his chosen mate loved and played without the dread of encroaching restrictions, where

> "With sons and daughters by their side they reach their full extent of life,
> Both decked with ornaments of gold "[5]

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[1] न मत्स्त्री सुभसत्तरा न सुयाशुतरा भुवन् ।
न मत्प्रतिच्यवीयसी न सक्थ्युद्यमीयसी विश्वस्मादिन्द्र उत्तर ॥ *RV*, X 86 6

[2] ibid, 18, 11, etc, vide *ante*

[3] को नो मह्या अदितये पुनर्दात्पितरं च दृशेयं मातर च ॥ ibid, I 24, 1

[4] त माता रेळिह स उ रेळिह मातरम् ॥ ibid X 114, 4

[5] पुत्रिणा ता कुमारिणा विश्वमायुर्व्यश्नुत ।
उभा हिरण्यपेशसा ॥ ibid, VIII 31, 8

Chapter VI

ADORNMENT

The life of the Ṛgvedic Aryan was plain and simple and his necessaries were very few. He was a modest man of moderate means with the brilliant equipment of the mind and soul. Under his simple semi-stitched and loosely flowing garments there lay concealed a restless and inquisitive person possessing intelligence of much depth. With our meagre evidence we shall discuss in this chapter the nature of women's dress, ornaments, hair toilet and other physical embellishments as also, incidentally, a few items of furniture generally used by the fair sex of the Ṛgvedic times. We shall first treat of the articles of dress.

Dress

The data furnished by the *Ṛgveda* regarding the articles of dress for women are very scanty, yet they give us a glimpse of the social manners and customs with respect to the bodily adornment. We find that in spite of the simplicity of the agricultural life women were considerably given to dressing themselves in gay variegated clothes. The love of art and physical adornment is rather a peculiar feature of a free society. In a community where girls of marriageable age are free to choose their husbands and where due to the freedom from seclusion a kind of intense rivalry in getting a suitable match ensues, certainly personal decoration counts to a great extent. The Ṛgvedic daughter was alive to this need of hers and she took pains to adorn herself in the most attractive and winning manner. Nor was her mother indifferent to this legitimate need of her daughter's. She decked her to the best of her ability[1] (and then sent her out to the festivities with a view to matrimony). Very frequently we come across references to girls attracting men after dressing themselves charmingly. A passage refers to a maiden adorning herself and waiting to meet her lover.[2] Even Uṣā 'like a

[1] सुसङ्काशा मातृमृष्टेव योषाविस्तन्वं कृणुषे दृशेकम् ॥ *ṚV.*, I. 123, 11.

[2] कन्या शुम्भमाना ibid., X. 107, 10.

loving matron for her husband, smiling and well attired, unmasks her beauty '[1] Again she 'decks her beauty shining forth with sunbeams, like women trooping to the festal meeting '[2] The sage Vāmadeva beholds 'maidens decking themselves with gay adornment to join the bridal feast '[3] Another passage has " him whom sacrifices clothe even as a woman with her robe "[4] At another place we find both the wife and her husband decking themselves [5] After having gained a fragrant dwelling, it was natural to place it under the charge of a new bride attired in fair apparel [6] In the manner of Usī, Vāc also 'hath shown her beauty to another as a fond well dressed woman to her husband '[7] We find almost the same idea repeated in the following line "This shrine have we made ready for thy coming, as the fond dame attires her for her husband "[8]

Sometimes the hymns themselves are referred to as 'clad in white and shining raiment '[9] Prayers to gods are meant to clothe them as though with a robe [10] Clothing was naturally indispensable And this is why we find the Rsi clothing his gods and prayers as well as his animals We read of mantle worn by Earth and Heaven "The robe, ' says the poet, "they spread upon the horse to clothe him, the upper covering and the golden trappings ' [11] Again we are informed of fair and well made robes,[12] and of white and shining raiment

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[1] जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासा । RV I 124 7

[2] व्युच्छन्ती रश्मिभि सूर्यस्याञ्ज्यङ्क्ते समनगा इव व्रा ॥ ibid 8

[3] कन्या इव वहतुमेतवा उ अञ्ज्यञ्जाना अभि चकशीमि । ibid IV 58 9

[4] यो वा यज्ञेभिरावृतोऽधिवस्त्रा वधूरिव । ibid VIII 26 13

[5] जने मित्रो न दम्पती अनक्ति बृहस्पते वाजयाशूँरिवाजौ ॥ ibid X 68 2

[6] भोजा जिग्यु सुरभि योनिमग्रे भोजा जिग्युवध्व या सुवासा ibid 107, 9

[7] ibid 71 4

[8] जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासा ibid IX 3 2

[9] भद्रा वस्त्राण्यर्जुना वसाना सेयमस्मे सनजा पित्र्या धी ॥ ibid III 39 2

[10] ibid X 5 4

[11] यदश्वाय वास उपस्तृणन्त्यधीवासं या हिरण्यान्यस्मै ॥ ibid I 162 16

[12] वस्त्रेव भद्रा सुकृता वसूयू रथ न धीर स्वपा अतक्षम् ॥ ibid, IX 29, 15

The above references will make it clear that the Aryans were not merely a spiritual people but they also cared for mundane affairs and wore many articles of dress. It is here that our progress in the description of their robes is impeded with difficulties, for the evidence that we have lacks much clarity and it neither specifically names the articles of dress nor does it distinguish the robes of men and women. We shall, however, attempt to bring out this distinction in the following pages, but before making an endeavour to this end it would be wiser to discuss in brief the nature of the fabric which the Aryans utilized for making their garments. We shall therefore start with discussing first the material of which the cloth was made.

Material of cloth

It appears that the materials of which the cloth was made were of three classes, namely the skin, wool and cotton. Of these skin is the clothing of all primitive societies. Before other fabrics of which cloth is now made were discovered, skins were the principal material of clothing as they could be easily obtained in pretty abundance by the primitive man, whose occupation was mainly hunting. The love for the use of skins as garments on the part of the ancient Indian sages and Brahmins may have been a remnant of primitive times which they preserved till later ages when civilization had considerably advanced. The retirement and seclusion of the hermitages in the dense forests of India may have fostered the use of skins during even comparatively later times. The *Ṛgveda* also records the use of skins with regard to the clothing of a few Brahmin sages and the gods. "The Munis, girdled with the wind, wear garments soiled of yellow hue."[1] Evidently these garments were made of tanned skin. Maruts, in like manner, are described as wearing deer-skin.[2] In later times we find Kālidāsa describing wet skin

Skins

[1] मुनयो वातरशनाः पिशङ्गा वसते मला । *ṚV.*, X. 136, 2.

[2] ibid., I. 166, 10.

garments (*valkala*) leaving a track of dripped water in the hermitage of Kaṇva[1] We are not sure if skin robes were put on by women also. It is possible that like the 'Munis' of the above reference retired women sages or even worldly lady seers wore skin garments In classical literature we find references to *tapasvinīs and other women inmates of hermitages moving* in skin dresses Śakuntalā wears a skin robe which bore knots on the shoulders[2] Sītā, in like manner, is dressed up in skins[3] in the hermitage of Vālmīki

Wool

Ūrṇā *or the sheep-wool was the most important material* of which cloth was made References to it are numerous which show incidentally that the Aryans were living in a cold climate which furthermore necessitated the use of wool Śāmulya,[4] which the bride wore at her nuptial and gave away *to the officiating priest, was probably a* woollen garment[5] Purified wool makes the robes of the Maruts[6] The bank of the river Paruṣṇī, the basin of which was the habitat of the Ṛgvedic Aryans, is associated with wool[7] The partiality of the poet for the wool of Gandhāra[8] sheep is easily explained by the excellent breed of the sheep of its locality which produced the softest fleeces This trait of the Gandhāra sheep is preserved to this day There can be hardly any doubt as to the fact that this *ūrṇā* was generally obtained from the sheep We have references to

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[1] तोयाधारपथाश्च वल्कलशिखानिष्यन्दरेखाङ्किता ॥ *Abh Śak* I 13

[2] ibid , p 23

[3] वन्येन सा वल्कलिनी शरीरं पत्यु प्रजासततये बभार ॥ *Raghu* XIV 82

[4] परा देहि शामुल्यं ब्रह्मभ्यो विभजा वसु । *RV* , X 85 29

[5] Griffith *The Rigveda* p 271

[6] उत स्म ते परुष्णामूर्णा वसत शुन्ध्यव *RV* , V 52, 9 cf IV 22 2

[7] ibid , cf वासो वायोऽवीनामा वासांसि मर्मृजत् ॥ ibid , X 26 6 In the latter reference perhaps the wool of sheep is meant as in the first line of the verse the words *śuca* and *śuca* occur which respectively connote a pure he goat and a pure she goat

[8] सर्वाहमस्मि रोमशा गन्धारीणामिवाविका ॥ *RV* , I 126, 7

ewes in the *Ṛgveda*[1] and in a passage the excellence of the Gandhāra ewes has been celebrated.[2] It may be added, however, that wool was also got from goats.[3] Wool seems to have been generally used for making cloth and it forms the poet's favourite simile to bring home to the mind the idea of softness.[4] The Punjab and its northern (Kashmir) and north-western vicinity furnished the Aryans with enough wool for warm clothing.

Cotton

Of cotton we have no direct evidence in the *Ṛgveda* but from the kind of clothes which the Aryans wore it may be supposed to have been known to them. In the *Saṁhitā* itself we have no reference to the cultivation of its plant but the different decorative patterns in the cloth which we shall mention below could have been best worked out in cotton material. Perhaps the primitive societies all over the world were ignorant of the cultivation of cotton but undoubtedly the Indians knew it as early as the chalcolithic age as pieces of cotton cloth have been found in the excavations of Mohenjo-Daro. The Indus-valley civilization was anterior to and in its later stages even contemporaneous with the Ṛgvedic civilization. Therefore it may be held without fear of contradiction that the cultivation of cotton was known to the agriculturist Aryans and that they had already started making use of cotton for the purposes of dress. At least we know that the Greeks of Alexander's train had seen fields of cotton plants, and had admired and mistaken them for wool-plants. The cultivation of cotton therefore must have been started in India even before the advent of the Aryans.

We shall now proceed to discuss the articles of dress worn by women. It has already been mentioned above that the *Saṁhitā* seldom distinguishes between the respective

[1] *ṚV.*, I. 126, 7 ; X. 95, 8.

[2] सर्वाहमस्मि रोमशा गन्धारीणामिवाविका ॥ ibid., I. 126, 7.

[3] ibid., X. 26, 6.

[4] ऊर्णाम्रदा ibid, 18, 10, etc.

robes of men and women, and in most cases the same articles of clothing are attributed to both the sexes. A number of articles of dress have been mentioned, namely *Adhivasa*,[1] *Vasa*,[2] *Sic*,[3] *Śamulya*,[4] *Drapi*[5] and *Peśas*.[6] It would seem that the woman put on four pieces of dress, i.e. an undergarment, a garment, an upper garment and a covering mantle. Of these the garment was perhaps a seldom used piece put on by personages enjoying an exceptionally high status in the society. *Sarī* as put on by modern Indian ladies, forming both the pleated skirt as well as the covering of the breast, was unknown. It would appear that the upper part of the body was generally uncovered although the use of a shawl *adhivasa*, or a close fitting vest *drapi*, would have occasionally served that purpose. We find that terracotta female figurines and sculptured images of the Śunga period and of subsequent ages support this custom as the absence of an upper clothing in their case must have been a continuation of the earlier Ṛgvedic custom. Probably the instance of Uṣā keeping her breast region uncovered has been taken from the habits of a dancing girl as the goddess has been compared to a *nṛtū*.[7] But except in a few cases hardly an example exists in the *Samhita* to show that an upper garment was used by women and besides the evidence of later sculpture on the point is significant. Therefore Dr Altekar's suggestion that *Śamulya* was probably a *sarī*[8] is difficult to accept. Undoubtedly it referred to an undergarment, but probably to a skirt in the pleated effect. The *sarī* is wound up and partly covers the bosom. *Śamulya*

Articles of Dress

Śamulya

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[1] *RV* I 140 9 162 16 X 5 4
[2] ibid X 102 2
[3] ibid 10 11 I 95 7 III 53 2
[4] ibid X 85 29
[5] ibid I 25 13 IX 100 9
[6] ibid IV 36 7 VII 42 1 VIII 31 8
[7] नृतूरिवापोर्णुते वक्ष उस्रेव बर्जहम् । ibid I 92 4
[8] *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation* p 351

was probably made of wool. Professor Sarkar, however, suggests that it even may have been of 'silk-cotton wool.'[1]

The garment or the piece of dress at times covering the upper part of a woman's body was called *drāpi.* It seems to have been 'a close-fitting (*ṚV.*, I. 166, 10) and gold-embroidered vest used by men and women'[2] of position. It was put on by women also as, although not in the *Ṛgveda,* a reference to it is preserved in the *Atharva Veda* where its wearer has been likened to a courtesan.[3] It was decidedly a robe used by important men. In the *Ṛgveda* Varuṇa[4] and Pavamāna[5] wear it. Women in exceptional cases made use of *drāpi.* Normally the region of the bosom remained uncovered.

Drāpi

Occasionally an upper garment, a kind of scarf (the *uttarīya* of later times) called *Vāsa,* was worn by women. It covered the head and may have perhaps even served sometimes as a covering for the bosom. Mudgalānī's *vāsa,* evidently this upper scarf, was seen streaming up in the sky.[6] Vāsa served the purposes of the modern *orhni.* *Sic* was obviously its broad border with which a mother covered the child in her lap.[7] It was the *anchala* or the border of the upper garment. The horizons at sunrise and sunset have been compared to the borders (*sicau*) of the sky-cloth.[8]

Vāsa

Sic

Over and above these, women wore an outer loose-flowing garment, *adhivāsa.* Perhaps *adhivāsa* was an unsewn shawl

[1] *Some Asp. of the Ear. Soc. His. of Ind.*, p. 69.

[2] ibid., p. 67.

[3] V. 7, 10.

[4] *ṚV.*, I. 25, 13.

[5] ibid., IX. 100, 9.

[6] ibid., X. 102, 2.

[7] ibid., 18, 11.

[8] उद्यमीति सविनेव बाहू उभे सिचौ यतते भीम ऋञ्जन । ibid., I. 95, 7. cf. III. 53, 2.

covering the entire person of the woman except her head.
Its all-covering nature is attested by the fact

Adhivāsa

that the forests on the Earth are likened to it in the *Ṛgveda*[1] Its use may have been made on occasions when women went out of the house to attend social functions A passage in the *Saṃhitā* refers to women 'dressed *in white garments and moving slowly like the milk that colours it* '[2]

Ordinarily women within the house put on an under-garment and an upper scarf covering the head We may cite here the pertinent remark made by the authors of the *Vedic Index* on the dress of the Indo-Aryans "The Vedic Indian," they observe, "seems often to have worn three garments—an undergarment (*nīvī*), a garment and an overgarment (*adhivāsa* *ṚV* I 140, 9 , 162, 16 ; X 5, 4) which was probably a mantle, and for which the names *atka* and *drāpi* also seem to be used. This accords with the description of the sacrificial garments given in the *Śatapatha Brāhmana* which comprises a *tarpya*, perhaps a 'silken under-garment', secondly a garment of undyed wool and then a mantle, while the ends of the turban after being tied behind the neck, are brought forward and tucked away in front A similar sort of garments in the case of women appears to be alluded to in the *Atharva Veda* (VIII 2,16 ; XIV. 2, 50) and the *Śatapatha Brahmana* (V 2, 1, 8) There is nothing to show exactly what differences there were between male and female costumes nor what was exactly the nature of the clothes in either case "[3]

The Aryans thus seem to have been well advanced in the art of weaving which had long been known to them Spinners and weavers were known Aufrecht, Muir and Griffith explain correctly the meaning of the word *siri*[4] as the female weaver

[1] I 140, 9

[2] VIII 17, 7

[3] *Vedic Index*, Vol II p 292

[4] *RV* , X 71, 9

The art of weaving was a busy trade which was occasionally chosen as a career by women. Patterns of clothes were various. Stylish ladies affected dyed gay clothes.[1] We read of Maruts also as putting on robes of purified wool. This purified wool may have been 'bleached or dyed.'[2] Brocades were known and rich gold threads were inter-woven with fibers of cotton or wool. The eastern and western horizons at the time of the sunrise and sunset with the bordering bright golden clouds have been compared to the borders of a scarf[3] brocaded with gold threads. Uṣā, the Dawn, is described as putting on such a brocaded robe. *Peśas* is explained by Professor Sarkar following Griffith and others as 'gold-embroidered cloth generally.'[4] But if the word *peśas* alone could convey that idea the poet's use of the adjective *hiraṇya* in certain cases[5] would indeed be redundant. It seems that the *peśas* was a costly cloth which when brocaded and embroidered with gold-threads was termed *hiraṇyapeśas* like the *hiraṇyadrāpi* of the *Atharva Veda.*[6] Our interpretation is borne out by a passage in the *Ṛgveda*[7] which refers to young girls wearing beautiful dress (*supeśāḥ*). In the phrase *supeśāḥ* we find *peśa*, dress (precious, and bright as clarified butter[8]), qualified by *su*, beautiful. *Hiraṇyapeśas*, a dress brocaded and inlayed with gold was worn by rich husbands and wives[9] who could afford it. The thread of gold must have made the cloth precious and beautiful, 'heavy and brilliant.'[10] The intricate designs[11] of the cloth give much credit

Brocades

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1 *ṚV.*, I. 92, 4 ; X. 1, 6.

2 शुन्ध्यवः ibid., V. 52, 9 ; cf *Some Asp. of the Ear. His. of Ind.*, p. 59.

3 *ṚV.*, I. 95, 7 ; III. 53, 2.

4 *Some Asp of the Ear. His. of Ind.*, p. 67.

5 *ṚV.*, VIII. 31, 8.

6 V. 7, 10.

7 चतुष्कपर्दा युवतिः सुपेशा घृतप्रतीका वयुनानि वस्ते । X. 114, 3.

8 ibid.

9 उभा हिरण्यपेशसा ॥ ibid., VIII. 31, 8.

10 ibid., VII. 34, 11.

11 ibid., II. 3, 6.

to the Indo Aryans for their weaving excellence Professor Sarkar makes an important observation with regard to the article of dress called *peśamsi* when used with reference to dancing girls (*nrtū*) He says that "it might refer to a pleated skirt made of such brocaded cloth, like the medieval and modern 'ghāghrā' or 'peśwaz' "[1]

Peśas

We have no clear evidence as to the extent of use of stitched clothes But since we know of the existence of the needle and the needlework from the *Rgveda* we may safely conclude that stitched clothes were also used In fact brocade work could not have been possible without a needle *The peśas and drapi could hardly be made without the help of the needle* The cold climate of the Punjab and the north-western frontier must have necessitated the use of stitched clothes

Stitched clothes

In the whole range of the *Rgveda* we nowhere come across a single reference to the foot wear and we may be therefore justified in concluding that the women did not make use of shoes Professor Sarkar rightly thinks that in view of both the men and women wearing anklets the use of the foot wear must have been limited[2]

Use of foot wear

Love of ornaments has been a racial trait of the Hindus, and the Aryans, whether men or women sought them with eagerness The frequency with which gold has been mentioned attests to the fact that it abounded in the country and ornaments made of gold and precious stones were worn in profusion From the earliest pieces of terracottas and sculptures we find the love of men and women for ornaments reflected in the abundance of their use There was a good deal of love making among the younger people and we frequently come across references

Ornaments

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1 *Some Asp of the Ear His of Ind*, p 67

2 ibid, p 70

to damsels decking themselves for attracting men. Ornaments must have been a great auxiliary to such girls. Gods, like men, wore ornaments of gold and jewels. When we find 'the coursers decked with pearly trappings,'[1] 'chariots decked with pearls'[2] and other such animate beings and inanimate objects as the horses and chariots decorated with precious stones, we cannot but naturally infer that women had access to dazzling jewelry.

Many a time we read of the many-hued (*citra*) and honoured necklace[3] (*niṣka*). A passage mentions the Maruts wearing a set of women's ornaments, i. e. 'anklets on feet.... gold on breast...., visors wrought of gold on heads.'[4] Another has the following: "Your rings, O Maruts, rest upon your shoulders and chains of gold are twined upon your bosom."[5] Niṣka, the small gold plates of which these necklaces were made, in later times came to mean a particular kind of gold coins. Is it possible that the coins named Niṣka had already become current, in howsoever crude a form, in the Ṛgvedic period itself? It is common in India to-day to string together gold *mohurs* or silver rupees to form a necklace. Women, like men, wore ear-pendants on the ears[6] the like of which are perhaps represented on the ears of pre-Mauryan terra-cotta female figurines. We have also a reference to heavy ornaments decking the shoulders[7] but it is difficult to explain or even conjecture what these ornaments were. On no piece of ancient sculpture or pre-Mauryan or primitive terracotta have such ornaments for shoulders been found as the *Ṛgveda* mentions. We find, however, on ancient pre-Mauryan crude terracotta pieces of the mother-goddess very thick and heavy

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1 *ṚV.*, I. 126, 4.
2 ibid., 35, 4; cf. ibid., 162, 16.
3 ibid., II. 34, 10; V. 19, 3; VIII. 49, 15.
4 ibid., V. 54, 11.
5 ibid., VII. 56, 13.
6 ibid., I. 122, 14.
7 अंसेष्वा वः प्रपथेषु खादयः ibid., I. 166, 9; cf. ibid., V. 54, 11.

ear-rings falling from the low hanging ear-lobes and resting on the shoulders Sometimes it becomes difficult to decide whether these were designed by the artist as ornaments for the ears or the shoulders or for both Possibly the present reference embodied a similar allusion Armlets,[1] bangles[2] and anklets[3] were worn by women as well as by men Perhaps rings for fingers were also in use although we do not find them specifically mentioned The nose-ring is conspicuously absent from the list of ornaments furnished by the *Rgveda* Nowhere do we find the slightest allusion made to it "It is curious," says Mr. Mehta, "that there is no mention of the nose ring, and those who connect this ornament with the Naqil or the gilt chain, that was put round the woman to make her feel that she was not the free creature as she was in the past, but subject to the custom of the tribe to which she was introduced, would be able to point to the introduction of this ornament as marking the transition from the early Vedic to the much manacled Pauranic degradation "[4] But Dr Altekar has very ably shown that "the nose ring was unknown throughout the whole of India during the entire Hindu period Hindu sculptures of Puri and Rajputana of the post-Muslim period begin to show the nose ring for the first time Both the positive and the negative evidence thus shows that the nose ring is not a Hindu ornament "[5]

Hymn 85 of the tenth book of the *Rgveda* refers to women's ornaments The ornaments with which the bride was adorned by her brother and father were her own property which she could give away on occasions like marriage Thus we have seen that on the neck she wore a necklace of pearls, and big hanging rings in the ears rested on her shoulders Arms

[1] *RV*, V 58, 2
[2] ibid, I 168, 3
[3] ibid, V 54, 11
[4] Foreword to *Women in Rgveda* 1st Ed, pp iii iv
[5] *Pos of Wom in Hin Civ*, pp 363 64

were decked with gold bracelets, wrists with bangles and ankles with anklets. Perhaps there were also rings adorning the fingers of the hands.

Ornaments were only external additions to beauty and women did not forget to enhance their natural charms by other means. Their attention seems to have been paid most to the hair. Hair was well combed and oiled,[1] parted and braided,[2] and let to hang down the shoulders and the waist. The sacred altar has been compared to a woman in the following line: "The youthful one, well shaped, with four locks braided, brightened with oil, puts on the ordinances."[3] She thus used to brighten her hair by putting oil in it. Again we have a reference to a dame with lovely hands and charms, with broad hair plaits and ample hips.[4] Broad hair plaits were the most characteristic features of the hair toilet. Loose tresses have been referred to in the *Ṛgveda* with precision and frequency. Rodasī has loose tresses[5] beautifully hanging on her back. A flame of fire has been compared to the tresses of a maiden:

Hair-cuiffure

> "The maidens with long tresses hold him in embrace, dead
> They rise up again to meet the loving one."[6]

Sinīvāli has been noted for her long broad tresses.[7] These tresses were evidently knit after the hair had been combed. Several fashions of wearing hair seem to have been in vogue. The later variety of styles of arranging hair as evidenced by the ancient paintings and sculptures of India appears to have already made a mark in the Ṛgvedic period. These styles, however, are only too vaguely indicated in the *Saṁhitā* to be

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1 *ṚV.*, X. 114, 3.
2 ibid., I. 140, 8; 167, 5.
3 ibid., X. 114, 3.
4 ibid., 86, 8.
5 ibid., I. 167, 5.
6 ibid., II. 39, 2.
7 ibid., II. 32, 6; VII. 55, 8.

described here. The young girl seems to have worn her hair in four braids[1] although the fashions of hair-dressing had not become stereotyped.

The sense of art and aesthetics had reached a high water-mark and we find quite a good number of the articles of toilet enjoined for the use of a *nāgaraka* by Vātsyāyana already put to use by the men and women of the Indo-Aryan society. Thus we have already surveyed women donning diaphanous attires and wearing the choicest ornaments of gold, pearls and precious stones (*maṇi*). We have also seen how they arranged their hair in various winning styles. We shall now describe in brief the last item of their toilet,—the embellishment of the body with the aid of ointments and perfumes. Embellishing the body with sweet perfumes had already come into

Perfumes

use. We read Aśvins compared to two fare dames embellishing their bodies.[2] Araṇyānī, the forest queen, is similarly described in the line: "Now have I praised the forest queen, sweet-scented, redolent of balm."[3] Similarly wives attending the funeral were expected to embellish their bodies with perfumes.[4] The matrons, whenever they went out, were perfumed and enbalmed with the 'odorous sweets.'[5] This finished, women put unguent[6] to their eyes the charm and strength of which have become so much a subject of description in the works of Kālidāsa. It has been noted by a celebrated scholar that there were perhaps four particular occasions for such sprinkling of perfumes. Girls might have used them to attract notice. The *apsarases*, the prostitutes, might have bathed in perfumed water to entice lovers. The wife who always waited for her loving husband did not forget to embellish her body with all sorts of adornments, as Kālidāsa's later

[1] चतुष्कपर्दा युवतिः *ṚV.*, X. 114, 3.

[2] ibid., II. 29, 2.

[3] ibid., X. 146, 6.

[4] ibid., 18, 7.

[5] ibid., VII. 55, 8

[6] ibid.; ibid., X. 85, 7.

notion—*strīṇām priyālokaphalo hi veśaḥ*[1]—had already been realized by the Ṛgvedic woman and was actually being lived by her to a considerable extent. The following verse of the funeral hymn brings out a partial picture of the toilet of the Indo-Aryan woman :—

> "Let these unwidowed dames with noble husbands adorn themselves with fragrant balm and unguent.
> Decked with fair jewels, taerless, free from sorrow, first let the matrons pass unto their houses."[2]

Although it will not be strictly logical to discuss in this chapter the items of furniture which decorated her household, nevertheless, a succinct reference to such of these as were used by women, it is supposed, will not be altogether out of place. We may therefore give below a brief account of their furniture. We find a few articles of furniture especially associated with women and the inner apartments of a house. *Tālpya,* mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*[3] and associated with the bridal[4] and the couple[5] in the *Atharva Veda,* is such an article of furniture. Prof. Sarkar correctly thinks that it was the nuptial bed.[6] He further suggests that it may have been a 'combination of a settee and a coffer;'[7] "such marriage-coffers," continues the learned Professor, "evidently could be used as couch or bed; and it is noteworthy that both these types of bed (*Talpa* and *Vahya*) are found in the inner apartments of the mid-Himālayan villager's dwelling house."[8] From a passage in the

Furniture

[1] *Ku.*, vii. 22.

[2] इमा नारीरविधवाः सुपत्नीराञ्जनेन सर्पिषा सं विशन्तु ।
अनश्रवोऽनमीवाः सुरत्ना आरोहन्तु जनयो योनिमग्रे ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 18, 7.

[3] ibid., VII. 55, 8.

[4] XIV. 2; 31, 41.

[5] V. 7, 12.

[6] *Some Asp. of the Ear. Soc. His. of Ind.*, p. 50.

[7] ibid.

[8] ibid.

Rgveda we learn that the *talpya* was the furniture of a palatial building or a princely house (*harmya*)[1] on which we find ladies reclining[2]. This shows that *tālpya* was kept in the inner apartments of a house. It was perhaps a heavy structure fixed at a spot within the house. The heavy nature of its structure may also be inferred from the fact that *talpa* in the *Manasāra*[3] literature and the works[4] of Kālidāsa means also a turret. Thus *talpya* would mean a heavy and high bedstead with small turrets. We use even in these days high beds with railings. *Talpya* may have been such a bed. *Vahya*,[5] on the other hand, as its etymology suggests (i.e. one which could be easily borne) may have been a lighter couch used by women. Possibly it was the nuptial bed of which the marriage hymn indirectly speaks.[6] It may have been given away to the bride in dowry (as it is the custom even now among the Hindus) and would have thus been carried (*vahya*). The *Rgveda* associates it with women[7] who are said to be sleeping on it.[8] It is significant that the *Atharva Veda* associates it with the nuptial ceremony[9] which the bride mounts[10] and on which she sleeps with her husband.[11] Kośa,[12] which is given to the bride in dowry and is sent away to the house of the bridegroom, may, beside meaning treasure or property (dowry) of some description, also connote the object in which such treasure is kept. It might then

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[1] *RV*, VII, 55, 8

[2] प्रोष्ठेशया *RV*, VII, 55, 8

[3] Acharya *A Dictionary of Hindu Architecture*

[4] *Raghu* V 75 XVI 6 11 XIX 2 Of these all but XVI 11 mean a high bed

[5] *RV*, VII, 55, 8

[6] ibid, X, 85, 7

[7] ibid IV, 5, 8, VII, 55, 8

[8] ibid IV, 5, 8

[9] XIV, 2, 30

[10] ibid, IV, 20, 3

[11] ibid, XIV, 2, 30

[12] *RV*, X, 85, 7

mean a coffer containing objects given away to and meant for the use of the bride. *Kos*, meaning a coffer, is still used in certain parts of the United Provinces and Bihar speaking the *Bhojapurī* dialect. It is significant that both these articles of furniture, the bed-stead and the coffer, should still form the items of dowry of a modern Hindu bride.

Chapter VII

EDUCATION

The trend

Religion influenced every branch of life of the Indo Aryan Sacrifices played a great part in the religious and spiritual society of the *Rgveda* When the Aryans first set foot on the Indian soil they were impressed greatly with the forces of nature, both cruel and benign The prayers in gratitude to these forces were uttered by them which, with others, gave rise to the *Samhitās* The immigrants were born poets and whatever their impassioned language touched was beautified. The poets who created the great literature of the *Rgveda* were bards of divinities and were mostly attached to the royal courts Their learning and wealth of poetry had become the property of the family which descended from father to son The family itself had become an institution for imparting education—the family lore—where the sons, as also probably the daughters, were taught in the language and literature of the times In the *Rgveda* is preserved an allusion to such a school where the teacher and the taught met and the commingled voices of the latter in imitation of the lessons of the former rang out like those of the frogs gathered together in the rainy season The text so ably translated by Griffith reads —

"Each of these twain receives the other kindly,
while they are revelling in the flow of waters
When the frog moistened by the rain springs forward
and Green and Spotty both combine their voices [1]
When one of these repeats the other's language,
as he who learns the lesson of the teacher,
Your every limb seems to be growing larger,
as ye converse with eloquence on the waters"[2]

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[1] अन्यो अन्यमनु गृभ्णात्येनोरपां प्रसर्गे यदमन्दिषाताम् ।
मण्डूको यदभिवृष्टः कनिष्कन्पृश्निः सम्पृङ्क्ते हरितेन वाचम् ॥ *RV* VII 103, 4

[2] यदेषामन्यो अन्यस्य वाचं शाक्तस्येव वदति शिक्षमाण ।
सर्वं तदेषां समृधेव पर्वयत्सुवाचो वदथनाध्यप्सु ॥ ibid , 5

It is very probable that the daughters of the family also mingled their voices, for they must have been taught somewhere to make themselves seers and poetesses (as we shall see below that they were) and nowhere indeed could so healthy an atmosphere be found as the company of their father. The teaching was mainly by rote the futility of which has been noted by the *Ṛgveda* where it registers its protest through a hint against the parrot or frog-like reciters[1] of the Veda.

Women, it would appear, were educated both in the spiritual as well as temporal subjects. The spiritual side comprised of a training in the religious lore and perhaps also in the historical tradition and mythology which made them at times ṛsis of hymns; and the temporal side comprised of a training in the fine arts as well as in the military science in certain special cases. We shall make an attempt in the following pages to give an account of this liberal education imparted to women.

The society which aimed more at the spiritual attainments of life and gave its women an important and imperative function in the daily and occasional sacrifices, was alive to their mental needs and it endeavoured to equip them with a training to that end. The maiden who had to seek a husband for herself with the aid of her elders would find her task easier if her intellectual attainments were added to her physical charms. As a qualification for marriage the education of the maiden was considered as important as that of the man. The text stipulates: "An unmarried young learned daughter should be married to a bridegroom who like her is learned. Never think of giving in marriage a daughter of very young age."[2] The *Yajurveda*, which depicts almost the samo conditions and

Necessity of Education

[1] उत त्वं सख्ये स्थिरपीतमाहुर्नैनं हिन्वन्त्यपि वाजिनेषु ।
अधेन्वा चरति माययैष वाचं शुश्रुवाँ अफलामपुष्पाम् ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 71, 5.

[2] आ धेनवो धुनयन्तामशिश्वीः सबर्दुघाः शशया अप्रदुग्धाः ।
नव्या नव्या युवतयो भवन्तीर्महद्देवानामसुरत्वमेकम् ॥ ibid., III. 55, 16.

times as the *Rgveda*, also records a similar view It says, "A young daughter who has observed brahmacarya (i e finished her studies) should be married to a bridegroom who like her is learned "[1] The *Atharva Veda* is equally emphatic in its support of female education It records, "A king by observing brahmacarya (the vow of study) can protect his kingdom easily An ācārya can impart education to his students if he has himself observed his brahmacarya A young daughter after the observance of brahmacarya should be married to a young man '[2]

In this manner education was made almost a necessary condition of marriage This education was imparted to the girl in her maidenhood and, as already mentioned, under the eye of the father perhaps in company with her brothers and such other kinsmen

Nature of education and subjects of study

The nature of the maiden's education is not directly evidenced in the *Rk Samhita* and it is difficult to determine what subjects she read We shall, however, attempt to piece together the indirect data that we have, and bring out the courses of the woman s education There is no doubt that in the age of warfare in which the Indo Aryans lived the nature of training for common men, nobles and princes, except in case of the priestly families, would have been mostly military in character But in the case of women save in a few instances of the Kṣatriya families, the courses of study must have been more humane On examination, we find that normally their education centred round the acquisiton of language and literature the fine arts and the military science We shall discuss these heads one by one below

[1] उपायाम्गृहीतोस्यादित्येभ्यस्त्वा ।
विष्णुरगायंपते सोमस्तं रक्षस्व मा त्वादवन ॥ *YV* VIII 1

[2] ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा राजा राष्ट्रं विरक्षति ।
आचार्यो ब्रह्मचर्येण ब्रह्मचारिणमिच्छते ।
ब्रह्मचर्येण कन्यायुवानं विन्दते पतिम् ॥ *AV* XII 3 17 18

That women were educated in the cultured and polished language and current literature can hardly be doubted. We find the *anukramaṇī* of the *Ṛgveda* ascribing

Language and Literature

to them a number of hymns. A score of names of women are on record showing their eligibility to become ṛṣis and the nature of the poetry they could compose. The compositions of these ladies are no less gifted in point of music and poetry than those of the men. With great tremour and zeal they send forth their prayers to the gods for the good of the suffering humanity. The foremost of these ṛṣis is Ghoṣā, the wife of the

Ghoṣā

great seer Kakṣīvān. She has been mentioned several times[1] in the *Ṛgveda* while two long hymns, 39 and 40 of the tenth maṇḍala stand to her credit. This 'daughter of a king' is equally mighty in her conception of divinity and the invocation of the Aśvins, who, in consequence of her prayer to them, give her Kakṣīvān

Lopāmudrā

for husband in an advanced age. Lopāmudrā, another lady Ṛṣi, is credited with having composed a hymn[3] jointly with her husband Agastya. Apālā ad-

Apālā

dresses hymn 91 of the tenth book and in like manner invokes Agni in the fifth book. To Romaśā, another wife of Kakṣīvān and the daughter of king

Viśvavāra

Svanaya and the grand-daughter of Bhāvya is ascribed a beautiful verse of fine imagery and tender feeling in which she says that she is as harmless and

Romaśā

docile as the 'ewes of the Gandhāras'. This she utters to her father-in-law, the father of Kakṣīvān, while presenting herself after her marriage to the

Sūryā

kinsmen of her groom. Sūryā, the daughter of Savitā, the sun, is a remarkable Ṛṣi who narrates the incidents of her own wedding with Soma, the moon. This

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[1] I. 117; 7; X. 86, etc.

[2] ibid., X. 40, 5.

[3] ibid., I. 179.

[4] सर्वाहमस्मि रोमशा गन्धारीणामिवाविका ॥ ibid., 126, 7.

hymn,[1] however, is composed of a traditional set of forty seven verses loosely strung together. The seer and speaker of the first verses of hymn 28 of the tenth book is Vasukara's wife, while the mother of the Gaupāyanas along with her sons, Bandhu, Subandhu, Śrutabandhu and Viprabandhu, is that of X, 60. The latter is also the independent seer of the sixth verse of that hymn.

Vasukara's wife

Gaupayana's mother

Indrāṇi, the powerful consort of Indra, is the speaker of the verses 2, 4 7, 9, 10, 15, 18, 22 and 23 of the hymn 86 of the tenth book. She is also the independent Ṛṣi of a powerful hymn[2], entitled 'the Jealous Wife's Spell', which she utters while digging out a herb for arresting the influence of an ascendant wife over her husband Indra. Under the name of Śaci Paulomi—very probably another name of Indrāṇi—she is made the author of another hymn[3], which records her success over her other rivals probably as a result of the efficacy of the herb to which she refers in the earlier hymn. Both the hymns of Indrāṇi are remarkable specimens of lyrical beauty which contain, besides, a language endowed with exceptional vigour. The mothers of Indra are also credited with the composition of a hymn[4] and thus we see that all the inmates of Indra's house are gifted with the talents of poetry. This would also incidentally show that at least among the higher classes education among women had reached a high watermark. Juhū, the wife of Brahmā, speaks the hymn 109 of the tenth book, and Śraddhā Kāmāyani is credited with the authorship of a hymn[5] of which she herself is the deity. Another lady Ṛṣi Sarparājnī addresses the hymn X, 189, while Mamatā is the author of the second verse of VI, 10.

Indrani

Indra's mothers

Juhū

Śraddhā

Sarparajnī and Mamata

[1] RV X 85
[2] ibid, 145 (उपनिषत्सपत्नीबाधनम्)
[3] ibid 159
[4] ibid, 153
[5] ibid 151

Yamī, a powerful woman, who speaks undeterred of her love for her twin brother and calls him a coward and a weakling, is the author of the hymn X, 10 jointly with her brother. In the entire range of the *Ṛk Saṁhitā* she stands out conspicuously as a lady of her own type, unparalleled and uncontrolled. The dialogue, contained in the hymn of which she is the principal speaker, is the earliest piece in the direction of dramatic literature. Another such piece is preserved in the hymn X, 95 of which Urvaśī is partly the author. Urvaśī, an apsaras wedded to king Purūravā in accordance with the terms of a contractual marriage, is a defying party in the dialogue of the hymn. She is the seer and speaker of the verses 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16 and 18 of hymn 95 of the tenth book.

Yamī

Urvaśī

Even rivers have been personified and they enter into conversation with the sage Viśvāmitra in *ṚV.* III, 33. The *evidence cited above will amply show that women were freely* trained to grow into ṛṣis and that no resentment on the part of men was felt on this account.

Tradition and Mythology

A study of the verses and hymns composed by these authoresses shows that they were versed in the folklore and the traditions of the time. These hymns give us a glimpse into the religious beliefs, social superstitions and the mythological traditions and casual pre-historic ideas of the times prior to the *Ṛgveda.* We know that the Purāṇās, which were compiled at a much later date, contain traditional history of a pre-Ṛgvedic society in their earlier parts. It is possible that some such literature existed during the time of the *Ṛgveda* in some form from where the Purāṇās drew their contents. It would appear that these traditions were a subject of study for the Ṛgvedic women. One of the most vigorous hymns of the *Ṛgveda* is that[1] of which the authorship is due to Vāk, the daughter of Ambhṛṇa. It embodies in a language of tremendous force

[1] X. 125.

and vigour the conception of the unity of the universe Vāk identifies herself with the latent forces of the Nature and asserts that it is she who governs the laws of the universe and sends the guardians of the cosmic order to their respective duties of creation and preservation This hymn is one of the earliest precursors of the non dual doctrine of the later Vedānta philosophy This would show that not only the mythology and traditions were taught to women but even the most intricate principles and concepts of metaphysics formed the subjects of their study Vāk marks the beginning of the line of the *brahmavadinis*, who flooded the later Vedic period with their number and philosophical discourses, discussions and speculations

Fine arts

We have indications in the *Rgveda* strong enough to permit us to conclude that a few of the fine arts formed subjects of women's syllabus of study It is, however, a fact that many of the fine arts which are now counted in the class had not yet developed For example, scultpture and painting were perhaps little known and there are but few instances of the Aryan architecture furnished by the *Samhita* Poetry had considerably advanced to which the existence of the *Rgveda* itself, being the earliest poetical expression of mankind, points The hymns dedicated to Usī rank among the best pieces of the poetry of all literatures of all times Since women are credited with their share in the composition of the Rgvedic poetry they must also have learnt the elementary rules of prosody, which, though not very advanced, must have existed to render the distinction between prose and poetry possible The drama had had just a beginning and the women seem to have had their share to which the dialogues of Yama and Yami and Urvaśi and Purūrava directly allude Women may have learnt this performance as well The earliest forms of drama were these dialogues in which women played their part admirably The *Samanas*, merry outdoor festivities of the

Poetry

Drama

Aryans, perhaps included also dramatic performances in the form of these dialogues and it is possible that a degenerated state of these *Samanas* themselves, which had been reborn in the institution of the Mauryan *Samājas*, may have been the cause of Aśoka's stopping[1] them altogether.

Music

The interest of the Indo-Aryans in music is well evidenced by the existence of the *Sāma Veda* which deals entirely with the music of the Vedic hymns. Music, besides being an acquisition of the priests, must also have been a necessary equipment of women. Songs were sung on all important occasions and functions, for example at the time of squeezing out the Soma juice. The following verse is a case in point:

"Driving thee in Vivasvān's course, the seven
sisters with their hymns
Made melody round thee the sage."[2]

Dancing

Another reference to music is preserved in the passage, "Ten dames have sung to welcome thee, even as a maiden greets her lover."[3] The Apsarases and Gandharvas to whom the later classical literature ascribes the art of music and dancing as a profession have found a mention in the *Ṛgveda*. This we have already noticed elsewhere.[4] Dancing is a necessary auxiliary to music as an art. Urvaśī and others of her profession must have maintained dancing along with music, for, after all, the profession of courtesans was not unknown to the authors of the *Saṁhitā*. We have direct references to female dancers in the *Ṛgveda*. Uṣā has been compared to a female dancer. The famale dancer put on *peśāṁsi* and was called *nṛtū*[5] and while dancing

[1] *Rock Edict I.*

[2] समु त्वा धीभिरस्वरन्हिन्वतीः सप्तजामयः ।
विप्रमाजा विवस्वनः ॥ *ṚV.*, IX, 66, 8.

[3] अभि त्वा योषणो दश जारं न कन्यानूषत । ibid., 56, 3.

[4] Vide *ante*.

[5] *ṚV.*, I. 92, 4.

she kept her bosom uncovered The following is an interesting verse pointing to the above inference :–

"She like a dancer, puts her embroidered garments on
As a cow yields her udder so she bares her breast "[1]

This, without doubt, is the picture of a professional dancer

We have references also to swings (*prenkham*)[2] ; and from swinging with music, dancing is but one step We have no direct evidence of mixed dance, but Kaegi, quoted elsewhere[3], suggests its existence and even asserts that young men taking maidens by the hand whirled about in accompaniment to the sound of the cymbals until the very ground they danced upon vibrated Music and dancing therefore must also have formed part of the maiden's acquired knowledge, whether for making her an accomplished woman or for aiding her in certain cases in the specialized vocation of a courtesan

In a foreign land where the Aryans had to fight their foes day and night for every inch of ground it must have been very difficult to advance in the interior with the encumbrance of a household so long as the women could not protect themselves and so long as they hung on the protection of their husbands Women in such a circumstance would become a burden if they were not trained in self defence But the sundry references in the *Rgveda* show that women, at least in special cases, had the knowledge of the use of the bow and arrow Sometimes

Military training

we find them going to dreadful battles along with their husbands Viśpalā, the wife of king Khela is such an amazon She, like Kaikeyī of the *Rāmāyana*, accompanies her lord to the battle field where she loses her leg which, however, is replaced with an iron one

[1] अधिपेशांसि वपते नृतूरिवापोर्णुते वक्ष उस्रेव बर्जहम् । *RV*, I 92 4
[2] ibid, VII 87, 5, 88 3
[3] Vide *ante*

by the Aśvins. This evidence is contained in the following interesting verse :—

"When in the time of night, in Khela's battle,
a leg was severed like a wild bird's pinion,
Straight ye gave Viśpalā a leg of iron that
she night move what time the conflict opened."[1]

ṚV., I. 112, 10 furnishes us with a proof of Viśpalā's being an assailant rather than the assailed. She is reported to

Viśpalā

be aggressive and seeking booty, though powerless to move. The passage reads, "Wherewith ye helped in battle of a thousands spoils, Viśpalā seeking booty, powerless to move."[2] The incident finds repeated mention in the *Ṛgveda*. For example, we read the following: "The quail from her great misery ye delivered and a new leg for Viśpalā provided,"[3] Again We have the line, "who....in a moment gave Viśpalā power to move."[4]

Mudgalānī's is another case[5] where a woman is equipped with military training. She was the wife of Mudgala and is credited with having driven the chariot for her husband in

Mudgalānī

battle like Subhadrā of the *Mahābhārata*. She is mentioned to have conquered her husband's enemy, who, thus defeated, took to his heals chased by her. The following is the text alluding to it :—

"Loose in the wind the woman's robe was streaming
what time she won a car-load with a thousand.
The charioteer in fight was Mudgalānī : She, Indra's dart,
heaped up the prize of battle."[6]

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[1] चरित्रं हि वरिवाच्छेदि पर्णमाजा खेलस्य परितक्म्यायाम् ।
सद्यो जङ्घामायसीं विश्पलायै धने हिते सर्तवे प्रत्यधत्तम् ॥ *ṚV.*, I. 116, 15.

[2] *ṚV.*, I. 112, 10.

[3] ibid., 118, 8.

[4] ibid., X. 39, 8 ; cf. I. 117, 11.

[5] रथीरभून्मुद्गलानी ibid., X. 102, 2.

[6] उतस्म वातो वहति वासो अस्या अधिरथं यदाजयत्सहस्रम् ।
रथीभून्मुद्गलानी गविष्टौ भरे कृतं व्यचेदिन्द्रसेना ॥ ibid.

"In hope of victory that bull was harnessed Kaśī, the driver, urged him on with shouting
As he ran swiftly with the car behind him his lifted heels pressed close on Mudgalānī "[1]

Here is a perfect picture of the close pursuit of a conquered Dāsa by an Aryan woman A few more cases are recorded in the *Rgveda*, V 61, 80, 6, VII 78, 5, VIII 33, 19, 91

The aboriginal Dāsas, it would appear, had regular armies recruited from women We have a verse referring to them "Women for weapons hath the Dāsa taken What injuries can his feeble armies do me? '[2] Their number in the non-Aryan armies had become so great that it was not thought ungallant to fight them as would follow from the above citation. Even Indra is said to have thrown his bolt upon the mother of Vrtra, a woman fighting by the side of her son, and killed her [3]

Thus we find from the above discussion of the evidence collected from the *Rgveda* that the woman in the Indo-Aryan society received a liberal education in almost all the branches of physical and spiritual instruction obtaining at the time They were, like the later Brahmavādinīs even members of the *Vidatha*, a popular assembly, where (like *Sabhā*) reciting of verses, 'singing of holy psalms, telling of the lore of being' and 'laying down of the rules of sacrifice'[4] were perhaps the common features With *Vidatha* women are directly connected which they are exhorted at the time of their marriage to address [5]

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[1] *RV*, X 102 8

[2] स्त्रियो हि दास आयुधानि चक्रे किं मा करन्नबला अस्य सेना । ibid, V 30, 9

[3] उत्तरा सूरधर पुत्र आसीद्दानु शये सहवत्सा न धेनु ॥ ibid, I 32 9

[4] ऋचां त्व पोषमास्ते पुपुष्वान् गायत्रं त्वो गायति शक्वरीषु ।
ब्रह्मा त्वो वदति जातविद्यां यज्ञस्य मात्रां वि मिमीत उत त्व ॥ ibid, X 71, 11

[5] त्वं विदथमा वदासि ॥ ibid, 85, 26
विदथमा वदाथ ॥ ibid, 27

Chapter VIII

LIBERTY

No wise and far-seeing nation can ever harbour the idea of secluding its women and no nation can hope to attain greatness and prosperity which suppresses the healthy habits of its mothers. The Aryans gave full liberty of outside movement to their women. There is not a single instance in the whole of the *Ṛgveda* to prove a contrary conclusion.

In the Ṛgvedic society where the woman was a divine singer and a gifted seer and where she had made a considerable headway in the art of music and dancing and in warfare, her freedom must have been ensured. Learning, being an art attainable by all worthy recipients (*adhikārī*), defies the principle of aristocracy and its possessor can neither remain concealed from the public gaze nor can bear the insult of being unfree. Many a time the custodian of learning has been the woman in India. Occasionally an amazon—a woman of war—of the national battle-field, she was ever out in the open and could not but come in contact with the rest of the world. The daughters of the freedom loving dwellers of the valleys of the Sindhu and Sarasvatī swung in the plains of the Punjab and on the heights of the Hindukush. The very conception of Uṣā would have been an impossibility and her lovely picture an undrawn sketch had the ṛṣis not seen their own free matrons in shining raiments. The free-moving woman of the Aryan household is conspicuously present in her secondary type of Uṣā. It is the beauty of the loving wife in changing robes (to attract her husband) combined with the charm of the professional dancer (*nṛtu*) with her 'broidered garments on' that makes Uṣā 'melt away the life of mortals, her lovers, like the fowler cutting birds in pieces.'

Purdah

There was no seclusion of women and the hated purdah of later times was absolutely unknown. Festal meetings attracted women in large numbers. The presence of matrons was considered essential at such gatherings. Some went there in holiday dresses as spectators, others as active participators in the function in ceremonial costumes. A passage[1] of the *Rgveda* has the following reference to women proceeding to social festivities in groups. "She decks her beauty shining forth with sunbeams, like women trooping to the festal meeting."[2] We get a further allusion to it in the line "Like maidens for the gathering they adorned them."[3] The presence of women at the popular assemblies was a common feature in the Rgvedic society. A common reference to women attending these assemblies is met with in the following passage. "Along the traces of the Wind they hurry, they come to him as dames to an assembly."[4] In these gatherings women seated themselves in a row and witnessed and assisted the sacrifice with longing interest and faith in the sacrificial fire as is evidenced by the following line. "Like women at a gathering fair to look on and gently smiling they incline to Agni."[5] This instance makes it clear that there was no purdah and that the poet *saw* the gentle smiles of the sitting women.

Festal gatherings, the assembly and the Samana

It seems that Aryan women were quite unlike their Greek sisters in the post Homeric times who were forbidden to be present at any banquet. In Greece men preferred to dine by themselves rather than expose their wives to their neighbours' gaze. And in order to defy all possibility of temptation the women were to wrap up every part of their

[1] R.V. I 124 8

[2] शुम्भन्ती रश्मिभि सूर्यस्याञ्ज्यङ्क्ते समनगा इव व्रा ॥ ibid

[3] पूर्वी शिशु न मातरा रिहाणे समग्रुवो न समनेष्वञ्जन् ॥ ibid VII 2 5

[4] सम्प्रेरते अनु वातस्य विष्टा ऐनं गच्छति समन न योषा । ibid X 168 2

[5] अभि प्रवन्त समनेव योषा कल्याण्य स्मयमानासो अग्निम् । ibid IV 58 8

bodies. In addition to these external arrangements such stringent laws were passed as might deter the most venturesome.

The popular assemblies to which women flocked and in which they spoke undeterred, were the *Sabhā*[1], *Vidatha*[2] and the *Samana*[3]. Of these the first two we have already explained elsewhere and the last we shall have occasion to discuss in the next chapter. Here it may only be added that the *Samana* was a popular gathering of men and women, mainly grown up boys and girls, where they met and played, loved and parted. Pischel, quoted in the *Vedic Index*, takes *Samana* to mean "a general popular festivity, to which women went to enjoy themselves...Young men and elderly women (*ṚV*. II. 36, 1; VII. 2, 5) sought there to find a husband and courtesans to make profit of the occasion." Sacrifices, as we have already seen, were another class of festivals at which the presence of women was obligatory. At the bridal feast were beheld maidens approaching it after having decked themselves with gay adornment.[4] And at the time of the departure of the bride women gave her a grand send-off out of the village. We have a graphic picture of such a scene in the verse quoted below :—

> "After thee, courser, come to the car, the bridegroom,
> the kine come after, and the charm of maidens."

It seems to have been one of the duties of women, especially girls, to bring the Soma plant from the hills for extracting its juice for sacrificial purposes as may be noted from the following passage: "To him, the lord of power,..as to a hill with speed the loving ones ascend."[5] Women were so free with men that sometimes we find young girls playing tricks with them. In the *Ṛgveda*, II, 15 7 we have a reference where some girls tease a blind and crippled man who is cured

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[1] योपा सभावती *ṚV*., I. 167, 3.

[2] त्वं विदथमा वदासि ॥ ibid., X. 85, 26 ; ibid., 27.

[3] ibid., I 124, 8 ; IV. 58, 8 ; VI. 75, 4 ; VII. 2, 5.

[4] कन्या इव वहतुमेतवा उ अञ्ज्यञ्जाना अभि चाकशीमि । ibid., IV. 58, 9.

[5] पतिं दक्षस्य विदथस्य नू सहो गिरिं न वेना अधि रोह तेजसा ॥ ibid., I. 56, 2.

of his disease by Indra, who appears at the scene and takes pity upon him. The interesting verse is as follows —

> 'Knowing the place wherein the maids were hiding
> the outcaste showed himself and stood before them
> The crippled stood erect, the blind beheld them'[1]

In like manner we read of women moving freely in company of their children and lovers. 'These meeting like a woman,' says the Ṛṣi, 'bear motherlike their children upon their bosom.'[2] Such references to the outdoor activities of women and to their appiontments at trysts[3] and festivals[4] where they even spent their night[5] may be multipled endlessly from the *Ṛgveda*. They were free to enjoy the company of their lovers[6]

We have already seen that women were free to choose their husbands and we have cited the instance of Śyāvāśva and Vimada. There was very little control of the parents over their childrens marriage. Only brothers had some control over their sister's marriage but the nature of such control was limited to a kind of supervision. Brothers seem to have advised their sisters in their marriage rather than controlled them. They were only expected to watch that no selfish man had designs over their sisters.[7] And we learn that brotherless sisters turned boldly towards men and chose their helpmates[8] from among them with the help of their attractive charms. In fact we have an interesting verse in the *Ṛgveda* which calls *bhadra* that *vadhu* alone who having brilliantly attired, herself selects her husband from an assemblage of men.[9]

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[1] स विद्वाँ अपगोह कनीनामविर्भवन्नुदतिष्ठत्परावृक ।
प्रति श्रोण स्थाद्व्यनगचष्ट सोमस्य ता मद इन्द्रश्चकार ॥ *I V* II 15 7

[2] ते आचरन्ती समनेव योषा मातेव पुत्रं बिभृतामुपस्थे । ibid VI 75 4

[3] ibid X 34 5 40 6

[4] ibid IV 58 8 VI 75 4 VII 2 5 X 86 10 etc

[5] ibid I 48 6 VII 9 4

[6] ibid III 31 7 33 10 IV 20 5 IX 96 20 cf II 10 5

[7] ibid IV 5 5

[8] ibid I 124 4 7

[9] भद्रा वधूर्भवति यत्सुपेशाः स्वयं सा मित्रं वनुते जने चित् ॥ ibid X 27, 12

In thought and very often in action women had full liberty. In the foregoing chapters we have seen that there was a good deal of love making among the younger people which could be possible only when there was access to one another. Women in most cases were left alone and checked mildly to love and part. Sometimes we come across cases of an immoral type in the *Ṛgveda* (we shall have occasion to discuss them in the following chapter) which must have resulted from a few cases of too free association between the sexes. Such uncontrolled or even partially controlled freedom was bound to result in moral laxities. The very type of marriage called *Svayamvara*, the self-choice of a husband, could not have been possible in a society of women of obstructed vision. In a community where modest maidens were at liberty to argue out the case of there own marriage[1] and choose their husbands, purdah was absolutely inconceivable. It is true, however, that when women moved outside they perhaps wrapped themselves up in a shawl. This was like the *orhni* of the present Indian women. In the *Ṛgveda* VIII, 17, 7 there is a reference to women dressed in white garments moving slowly 'like the milk which colours the Soma juice.'[2]

There is, however, a verse which may be supposed by a critic, unfamiliar with the traditions of the *Ṛgveda*, to contain a reference to the seclusion of women. It runs as follows :—

> "With whom is joined the deftly fashioned ladle,
> as 't were a lance's butt with gold and adornment,
> Like a man's consort moving in seclusion,
> like talk at gathering or in festal synod."[3]

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[1] ṚV., X. 10.

[2] ibid., VIII. 17, 7.

[3] मिम्यक्ष येषु सुधिता घृताची हिरण्यनिर्णिगुपरा न ऋष्टिः ।
गुहा चरन्ती मनुषो न योषा सभावती विदथ्येव सं वाक् ॥ ibid., I. 167, 3.

The phrase 'moving in seclusion' (*guhā carantī yosa*) cannot be taken too literally The word *guha* though it qualifies *yosa* has nevertheless, the sense more of private apartments in a house than of seclusion With the innumerable references quoted here and elsewhere this verse does not fit well if we interpret it as alluding to the custom of seclusion of women Other verses make it abundantly clear that there was no seclusion of women at all In exceptional cases they could be even staked and lost, which fact also points to the same idea *Guha* (secluded), therefore, implies an allusion to the inner apartments of a house Even to day the most modern and airy type of residence has its private rooms After all man needs some privacy He must have his unguarded moments which require the shield of inner chambers If we turn to the pages of the laterly *Manasara* we shall find that residences were fitted with inner apartments So the reference here is not made to seclusion but to the movements of women in the inner chambers and the courtyard of a house Then it may be remembered that the reference in point is a comparison drawn between a woman moving in the interior of a house like a deftly fashioned ladle covered with gold and adornment and a talk before it is delivered at a gathering in a festal synod In such a case the allusion is made to the woman moving in the interior of a house as also to an undelivered speech and both these instances are relative, the former to the woman's exit out of the house and the latter to the talk later expressed The phrase in itself is much too incomplete to yield the sense which we have opposed If it were not so, how could the Rgvedic woman be expected to address the *Sabha* and the *Vidatha* and to visit the *Samana*?

In a land where there was little fear of molestation women were not prevented from going out for the dread of an outrageous assault and were therefore unchecked to go wherever they liked, as such, the first and foremost reason for seclusion is wanting in the case of the Aryan women and

their confinement within doors is consequently a myth. We have evidence in the following line attesting to the safety of roads: "She stayed not for a herald to conduct her, this is the kingdom of a ruler guarded."[1] This makes it clear that busy women ran to and fro unguarded by escorts on the public highways in execution of their errands and their passage was not stayed for want of guards or heralds. It is possible, however, that ladies of rank may have walked under the guard of a splendid retinue. Nor is an instance of an unguarded woman being molested altogether wanting in the *Ṛgveda* and we read, although only once, of the Vṛṣākapi assaulting Indrāṇī and of Indra shielding him from the latter's wrath.[2] Yet this instace itself indirectly proves the woman's free and unguarded movements out of her house.

The position of women in Ṛgvedic India was to a great extent similar to that in Homeric Athens. In the epoch Homer lived and wrote in, women in Athens were dignified and free. Women there, at least of the upper classes, enjoyed considerable freedom in thought and deed as may be gathered from the evidence of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. "There is nothing better or noble," says Ullysses to Nausicæ, "than when husband and wife being of one mind rule a household."[3] This position, however, deteriorates during the following ages and by the time we reach what is called the Golden Age of Pericles, women have already fallen to a piteous lot and are nothing short of cloistered slaves. At this stage when we compare the status of the

Athens

Aryan women with that of the Athenian ones, we are surprised to note that the lives of women at Athens were passed as slaves in a slave State. "When we think of the incredible galaxy of great names, Socrates, Plato, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides, Aristophanes, Pericles, Alci-

[1] न दूताय प्रह्ये तस्थ एषा तथा राष्ट्रं गुपितं क्षत्रियस्य ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 109, 3.

[2] ibid., 86, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8.

[3] *Odyssey*, VI. 182.

biades, Themistocles, Demosthenes, Herodotus, Aristotle, Thucydides, Praxiteles, Xenophon who lived and flourished within a very few years of one another, who are known, everyone by name at least to every educated person, it is important to remember that those sons of women achieved their eminence at the cost not only of a horde of male slaves, but of the enslavement of the whole female sex" "Plato himself classes together 'children women and servants' precisely as the tenth commandment of the Hebrew and Christian religions classes together one's neighbour's wife, his servants, his ox, his ass and the rest of his property" The Rgvedic women had little in common with these women of Athens

Egypt gave to her women entirely a contrary status There women enjoyed even greater liberty than men, and Sophocles had such men in his mind when he wrote "O true image of the ways of Egypt that they show in their spirit and their life For there men sit weaving in the house, but the wives go forth to win the daily bread" This reads like a trait of a matriarchal state of society and nothing could be farther from it than the condition of the Rgvedic women who were considered ornaments of the household They were neither the cloistered slaves like their Athenian sisters nor were they the viragoes of the yard like the Egyptian women They were free in their movements within and without the house, but they never replaced their men in their outdoor duties It is the peculiar distinctive feature of the Aryan social structure to demarcate completely the functions of its constituent members, both men and women, and this trait had already made its appearance during the Rgvedic epoch These functions of men and women were remarkably fused, yet this fusion never gave rise to any confusion as to the respective duties of the sexes, both working in their own spheres Women were free in their movements but only up to a point within the bounds of civility and modesty

Indo Aryan women

Although they did not suffer from any restricting injunctions of the Greek type yet they grew in their habits such healthy conventions as gave them the liberty of action without making them wild and without compromising their dignity.

Chapter IX

MORALITY

In a spiritual society morality is viewed as a necessary virtue. The Rgvedic society was both spiritual and material where liberty of women was recognized and ensured. But it is to be noted that much freedom of intercourse between the opposite sexes and a very high degree of ethics do not well combine in practice. This was what happened in the early Aryan settlement in India. Although the Rgvedic society is generally noted for its high type of morality yet it has to be admitted that it was at times not entirely free from the incidents of moral laxities. But these were few and far between. The normal state of morality is instanced in the citation below which points out to the fact that ordinarily girls prior to their marriage were entirely ignorant of the sexual experience. The lady Ṛṣi Ghoṣā, who had grown old in her father's house yearning for a wealthy and powerful husband, prays to the Aśvins, the twin gods.

> "Of this we have no knowledge. Tell it forth to us, how the youth rests within the chambers of the bride. Fain would we reach the dwelling of the vigorous steer who loves the time, O Asvins this is our desire."[1]

To be born of natural parents was considered proper. Indra himself has been commended as "Law born and Law protector."[2] Thus law could be duly protected by him alone who himself was an offspring of a lawful wedlock. Indra was the leader and defender of the people in his capacity as a king. He had eclipsed Varuna in might and prowess and in kingly virtues

Normal morality

[1] न तस्य विद्म तदुषु प्र वोचत युवा ह यद्युवत्याः क्षेति योनिषु ।
प्रियोस्त्रियस्य वृषभस्य रेतिनो गृहं गमेमाश्विना तदुश्मसि ॥ *RV* X 40, 11

[2] ऋतपा ऋतेजा ibid VII 20 6

and splendour. He has therefore been addressed as 'Law born and Law protector.' Thus the normal state of society was the wedded existence of man and woman loving each other and keeping strict sexual fidelity. A dame, free from all social blemishes was ever dear to her husband[1] and was considered by him the very apple of his eye.

Lawless unions and sexual transgressions, however, as we have already suggested above, were not altogether wanting in the society for they happen to be the necessary incidents of a free community like the Indo-Aryan which sanctioned free meeting between its men and women. There are a number of references in the *Ṛgveda* to lawless unions between man and woman and to the criminal acts resulting from them. We have an interesting instance of it in the following line: "Upholders of law, ye strong Ādityas, remove my sin like her who bears in secret."[2] Illegitimate children were thus not unknown to the early Aryan society to which we have a few more instances. A passage[3] in the *Ṛgveda* refers to the most daring and hateful act of casting away the new-born babe by the erring mother for fear of social ostracism. "Lord of bay steeds," prays the Ṛṣi, "thou broughtest from the anthill the unwedded damsel's son whom ants were eating."[4] Another verse refers to the same idea:

Lawless unions

"So Indra, lord of hundred powers, caused
the unwedded damsel's son,
The casteway, to share the lauds."[5]

The hymn X, 62 refers to a sin incurred from destroying the fœtus and thus killing the child in the womb and is meant for the purification of it.

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1 अनवद्या पतिजुष्टेव नारी ॥ *ṚV.* I. 37, 3.

2 धृतव्रता आदित्या इषिरा आरे मत्कर्त रहसूरिवागः । ibid., II. 29, 1.

3 ibid., IV. 19, 9.

4 वम्रीभिः पुत्रमग्रुवो अदानं निवेशनाद्धरिव आ जभर्थ । ibid.

5 उत त्यं पुत्रमग्रुवः परावृक्तं शतक्रतुः
उक्थेष्विन्द्र आभजत् ॥ ibid., 30,16.

Jara

Jara, paramour, is a common term denoting a lover used frequently in the similes of the *Rk Samhita* The occurrence of this word warrants the existence of love of an unlawful type not permitted by the society From the frequency with which this word occurs in the *Rgveda* we can safely conclude that women enjoyed sometimes too much freedom to be morally safe and chaste Professor Sarkar observes in this connection that 'It is presumed by a domestic ritual formula in the *Rgveda*[1] that every married woman might have her *jara* [2] This observation however, is not quite apt and the generalization contained in the remark of the Professor is unwarranted by adequate evidence of the *Rgveda*

We give below some of the references contained in the *Samhita* alluding to unlicensed love and to paramours The poet says in a passage 'For me Rjraśva like a youthful lover (*jara*) hath cut piecemeal one and a hundred wethers [3] In *RV*, I, 134 3 the poet wakes up intelligence as when a lover (*jara*) awakens his sleeping love [4] Another passage makes Indra the lover (*jara*) of maidens [5] The sun has been imagined as following the dawn like a youthful lover *maryo* chasing an attractive woman [6] We read of lovers enhancing their grace[7] *maryaśri* by affecting attractive costume [8] 'The virile young man (*marya*) is normally a lover, constantly in company of youthful maidens (*yuvati*) [9]

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[1] *RV* X 16° 5 6=*AV* VIII 6 7 8

[2] *Some Asp of the Ear Soc Hist of Ind* p 85

[3] जार कनीन इव चक्षदान ऋज्राश्व शतमेक च मेषान् ॥ *RV* I 117 18

[4] प्र बोधया पुरंधि जार आ ससतीमिव । ibid 134 3

[5] प्रयन्तमित्परि जार कनीना पश्यामसि नोपनिपद्यमानम् । ibid 15° 4

[6] सूर्यो देवीमुषस रोचमाना मर्यो न योषामभ्येति पश्चात । ibid 115 2

[7] ibid II 10 5

[8] मर्यो न शुभ्रस्तन्व मृजानोऽत्यो न सृत्वा सनये धनानाम् ibid IX 96 23

[9] ibid III 31 7 33 10 IV 20 5 IX 96 20 *Some Asp of the Ear Soc Hist of Ind* p 96

Young women are alluded to have wooed their lovers[1] (*jāra*). A grown up girl is mentioned as caressing her lover (*jāra*) in the manner of the fingers pressing the Soma[2]. The lover (*marya*) puts on bright garments[3] to attract notice. A passage has the following: "The cows have sung with joy to him even as a woman to her love" (*jāra*).[4] The lover (*jāra*) is said to have 'sped to his love'.[5] The enticing lure of the dice is compared to the passion of the love-led girl (*jāriṇī*) who runs to meet her lover at the rendezvous.[6] We have a reference to a paramour (*jāra*) in the following line: "Ten dames have sung to welcome thee, even as a maiden greets her love."[7] Another passage runs as follows. "So maidens bow before the youthful gallant who comes with love to them who yearn to meet him."[8] Verse VI, 75,4 has: "These meeting like a woman and her lover bear mother like, their child upon their bosom."[9] In another verse the poet draws a beautiful comparison between a bow-string and a lady-love :—

> "Close to his ear as fain to speak she presses,
> holding her well loved friend in her embraces.
> Strained on the bow, she whispers like a woman,
> this bow-string that preserves in the combat."[10]

In cases where a girl was left both fatherless and brotherless it was her own affair to seek out a husband for herself.

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[1] अभि गावो अनूपत योषा जारमिव प्रियम् । *ṚV., IX.* 32, 5.

[2] अभित्वा योषणा दश जार न कन्यानूषत ।
मृज्यसे सोम सातये ॥ ibid., 56, 3.

[3] ibid., IX. 96, 20.

[4] ibid., IX. 32, 5.

[5] गच्छञ्जारो न योषितम् ॥ ibid., 38, 4.

[6] न्युप्ताश्च बभ्रवो वाचमक्रतँ एमीदेषां निष्कृतं जारिणीव ॥ ibid., X. 34, 5.

[7] ibid., IX. 56, 3.

[8] ibid., X. 36, 6.

[9] ते आचरन्ती समनेव योषा मातेव पुत्रं विभृतामुपस्थे । ibid., VI. 75,4.

[10] वक्ष्यन्तीवेदा गनीगन्ति कर्णं प्रियं सखायं परिषस्वजाना ।
योषेव शिङ्क्ते वितताधि धन्वञ्ज्या इयं समने पारयन्ती ॥ ibid., VI. 75, 3.

In such a case there was the possibility of her going astray and it is to such a definite fact that a reference is made in IV, 5, 8:—

"Like youthful women without brothers straying,
like dames who hate their lords of evil conduct,
They who are full of sin, untrue, unfaithful,
they have engendered this abysmal station."[1]

In an interesting hymn[2] we are told of a lady-love lying half asleep in her house amidst her people expecting her devout lover, while the latter steals into the house after propitiating and invoking gods and praying the watch dogs to sleep,[3] awakens[4] and enjoys her till dawn.[5] We have references to young girls receiving suitors freely,[6] to maidens choosing their friends[7] (*mitram*) and to *kanyās* bending themselves to receive the warm embraces of their lovers in the manner of the river offering an easy ford and passage to men.[8] Indra has been made a frequent and common lover enjoying the company of young women. He is celebarated as a lover proud of his beloved lady[9] (*yoṣā*). He is said to be moving with the young dames of heaven.[10] He is lauded with prayers for his strength and vitality. The poet sings of him: "Born master of the life that shall be born, the maiden's lover and matron's lord." He comes as the lord of women to the holy place.[11] Again we have such a reference in the following verse:—

Indu hath started forth for Indra's meeting place,
and slights not as a friend the promise of his friend.

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[1] अभ्रातरो न योषणो व्यन्त पतिरिपो न जनयो दुरेवा ।
[2] पापास सन्तो अनृता असत्या इद पदमजनता गभीरं ॥ *ṚV*, IV 5, 5
[3] ibid, I 131, 13
[4] ibid.
[5] प्र चक्षय रोदसी वासयोषस श्रवसे वासयोषस ॥ ibid
[6] ibid, X. 27, 12; cf 30, 6
[7] ibid, X. 27, 12
[8] नि ते नसै पीप्यानेव योषा मर्यायेव कन्या शश्वचै ते । ibid, III 33, 10
[9] मर्यो न योषामभि मन्यमानोऽच्छा विवक्मि पुरुहूतमिन्द्रम् ॥ ibid, IV. 20, 5.
[10] गुहा चरन्तं सखिभि शिवेभिर्दिवो यह्वीभिर्न गुहा बभूव ॥ ibid, III 1, 9
[11] अपामृतस्य प्रदिवो नवीयसी. पतिर्जनीनामुप याति निष्कृतम् ॥ ibid, IX. 86, 32.

Soma comes onward like a youth with youthful maids
and gains the beaker by a course of hundred paths."[1]

The poet has made an enquiry into the secret love of Uṣā. Like her type the Eos of the Greek mythology who is loved by a mortal she is also considered by the Aryan poet to be loving a mortal and hence his curiosity :—

What mortal, O immortal Dawn, enjoyeth thee ?
Where loves thou ?
To whom, O radiant, dost thou go ?

When a woman concedes to prayer the task of her suitor becomes an easy one, for it is almost a part of his nature to be subservient to and complying with the wishes of the woman he adores. At the time of making love the lover is at his weakest point and is prepared to stoop down to the lowest type of undeserved praise for her love. The Aryan psychologist is well aware of it and he hints at the idea in verse I, 83, 2 where he draws a simile from the common life of the people and says, 'like suitors they delight in him who loveth prayer.'[2] In another simile the poet shows that people approaching a friend's sister were censured by the society, but, nevertheless, instances prove that men sometimes did approach them. This is manifest from the following line : "He comes as it were to his friend's sister roaring."[3] This line, however, does not yield enough sense for a satisfactory interpretation. The creeping in of moral laxity in the society to some extent was natural when polygamy—even polyandry, although in a very few and uncertain cases—was considerably in vogue. More than once a man in the *Ṛgveda* has been made a 'lord of youthful maidens' by the benevolent Aśvins, the healing physicians of the firmament who specialize, beside the treatment of the eye, in giving vitality and strength to weaklings or invalid husbands.

[1] प्रो अयासीदिन्दुरिन्द्रस्य निष्कृतं सखा सख्युर्न प्र मिनाति संगिरम् ।
मर्य इव युवतिभिः समर्षति सोमः कलशे शतयाम्ना पथा ॥ *RV*., IX. 86, 16.

[2] ब्रह्मप्रियं जोषयन्ते वरा इव ॥ *Ibid*., I. 83, 2.

[3] जार [illegible] स्वसुर्न जामिम् ॥ *Ibid*., IX. 96, 22

Many a time they have been alluded to as giving children to the wives of eunuchs From the days of the Rgvedic king Vimada down to the epic figure of Pāndu they are known to be treating the invalid and coming to the rescue of the hard lot of the latter's wives Pāndu himself, who could not beget a single child and died of the very first union of Mādrī, cannot but be considered lacking in vitality, suffering from jaundice withal Aśvins are friends of such weaklings' wives as Vimada and Pāndu and of girls like Ghosā growing old in their fathers' houses Verse I, 116, 13 reads —

"In the great rite the wise dame called Nāsatyas,
you lords of many treasures to assist her
Ye heard the weakling's wife, as't were an order
and gave to her a son Hiranyahasta "[1]

Again we get the following —

"Victors, carborne, ye rent the rock asunder
bulls heard the calling of the eunuch's consort "[2]

Other such references, which can be multiplied innumerably, have already been cited elsewhere

Many verses can be cited to show that powerful people revelled in wine (Soma beverage) and women to whom the latter must have been an article of luxury To such men do the verses IV, 5, 5 and II, 35, 5 allude The latter reads as follows "The never sullen waters youthful maidens carefully decking, wait on him the youthful " The very next verse[3] difficult to understand and interpret reads as follows —

"To him three dames are offering food to feed him,
goddesses to the god whom none may injure
Within the waters hath he pressed as hollows
and drinks their milk who now are first made
mothers "

[1] *RV*, I 116 13

[2] ibid, VI 62 7

[3] ibid, 6.

Women have also been accused of stealing looks upon men which is borne out by the line, 'Those who are glancing forth like women, in their way.'[1] We thus find that women were as much guilty as men in making immodest advances at times. The criminals of one sex were amply responded by those of the other. Both were equally abhorred and their acts detested and denounced by the society.

Elopements

The free mixing of the sexes on the festivals and in popular assemblies gave occasions to young men and women to make friends with each other. These friendships were not always approved by the parents of the parties and where they were so disapproved and opposed by the olders love had not a smooth sailing. Cogent love consequently broke all barriers in such cases and sought redress through elopements. Many a case is on record in which the love-led maiden has made her escape along with her heroic knight in order to shield herself from the chiding elders of the society and frowning parents. Of such allusions those of Vimada and Kamadyu stand out conspicuously.[2]

Courtesans

The presence of the *apsarases* among the godly personages of the *Ṛgveda* is a clear proof of the existence of courtesans, and even perhaps of prostitutes, in the society. A nṛtu, compared to the Uṣā and given shining and broidered garments, keeping open her breasts,[3] *certainly refers to* professional dancers who went to fairs and merriments for making acquaintance of false love among the young people. Hymn X, 95 points out to coquetry of the *apsarases*.[4] King Purūravā had much to suffer on account of the celestial courtesan Urvaśī.

[1] ṚV; I. 112. 19; 116. 1; 117. 20; X. 39. 7; 65. 12.
[2] ṚV., I. 92. 4.
[3] ṚV., X. 95. 9.
[4] ṚV., I. 85. 1.

Adultery among married women was a rare instance in the Indo-Aryan society and the Babylonian type of prostitution was entirely unknown to the times of the *Ṛgveda*. In Babylonia prostitution had become almost a religious duty among women and was recognized as such. Herodotus noticed it in his travels. He says that every woman born in the country must sit in the temple of the goddesses and consort with a stranger; the beautiful are soon free but some remain for three or four years. Such a state of affairs could not be imagined in the Ṛgvedic community.

Adultery

We shall here make a brief reference to a kind of social institution called the *Samana*. We have had occasions to refer to this institution at several places in the previous chapters along with other institutions like the *Sabhā* and the *Vidatha*. The nature of the *Samana* has already been explained but here its survey at a little length may not be altogether fruitless. *Samana* was a social institution which had become very popular among the Indo-Aryans. It was a sort of fair to which both men and women of all ages flocked. It was dominated mainly by people of the younger sort who eagerly awaited its advent. It was a busy centre of amusement and its conspicuous features were frolick, mirth and merriment. By day manly sports like the chariot and horse racing were a common feature whereas by night more tender and absorbing amusements were seen in progress. Dialogues like those of Yama and Yamī and Purūravā and Urvaśī may have been staged in these *Samanas*. They were beheld in progress all night by fire-light and torches[1] and they dispersed at the approach of the dawn.[2] By far the most prominent and arresting feature was the quest of suitable matches for men and women. Lovers of both sexes having adorned themselves

Samana

[1] ṚV., I 48 6

[2] ibid., also VII 9, 4, cf. X 69, 11

with diaphanous attires of variegated colours moved to and fro with a view to matrimony.[1] Young auspicious maidens wearing a jovial look and a buoyant countenance[2] and moving with amorous designs took the very breath of young men away. Mothers often came to the help of these damsels by giving them all help in way of decorating[3] their persons and with advice. Even those ladies who had failed to find a husband till old age appeared heavily decked at these *Samanas*[4] as also perhaps those widows who cared to remarry and return to a state of fresh coverture.[5] *Samanas* with their busy programme in progress at the fire-lit night must have resembled in their main features of mirth and merriment the modern exhibitions and carnivals with their various lightful and engaging activities with the only difference that in the latter case the main features of the *Samanas*, viz. the outside sports of chariot and horse racing and the wooing of lovers, are wanting. Yet the gala appearance at both the festivities was mainly similar.

Professor Sarkar[6] suggests that Indrāṇī, a sex-goddess, was worshipped at the *Samanas* according to an ancient custom. This idea is suggested to him by an indirect reference contained in the following verse :—

> "From olden time the matron goes to feast and general sacrifice.
>
> Mother of heroes, Indra's queen, the *rite's ordainer is extolled.*"[7]

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[1] *ṚV.*, VII. 2, 5.

[2] ibid., IV. 58, 8.

[3] ibid., VII. 2, 5.

[4] ibid.

[5] ibid., X. 40, 2.

[6] *Some Asp. of the Ear. Soc. Hist. of Ind.*, p. 94.

[7] संहोत्रं स्म पुरा नारी समनं वाव गच्छति ।
वेधा ऋतस्य वारिणीन्द्रपत्नी महीयते विश्वस्मादिन्द्र उत्तरः ॥ *ṚV.*, X. 86, 10.

Here we may make a slight historical survey of the *Samanas* During Rgvedic times these were a licensed institution the existence and continuance of which were ensured and encouraged by the elders of the society, themselves taking part in them and sending their sons and daughters to them with a view to finding suitable matches for the purpose of wedding Thus the institution served a great social need of the Indo-Aryan community by bringing together at the nightly gatherings young men and women Such meetings naturally could have engendered laxities in the morals of the young folk and the *Samanas* would have well been viewed with a great disapproval by a later, more conservative, Hindu society To such a community bound with new formulæ of social civilities, the earlier *Samanas* must have appeared as shocking and surely their degenerate state made a puritanical Indian emperor attack the institution with much vehemence

The *Samana* of the *Rgveda* seems to have been the same as the *Samajjā* of the Aśokan edict of which the objectionable type was stopped by Aśoka The first of the Fourteen Rock Edicts forbids the holding of the *Samajja* in the following words "Nor should any *Samaja* be held For his Sacred and Gracious Majesty sees much objection in such *Samaja* But there are also certain varieties of same which are considered commendable by his Sacred and Gracious Majesty"[1] Here we may quote the note made on the word *Samaja* by Dr R K Mookerji in his *Aśoka* to elucidate the meaning and features of this institution It is as follows "The objectionable kind of *Samajja* is described in the *Digha Nikāya* [Vol iii p 183, P T S] as comprising the six features of 'dancing, singing, music, story-telling, cymbals, and tam tams' Another kind of *samajja* is described in the *Commentary on Dhammapada* [Vol iv. p 59, P T S], where it it stated how it was organised by a company of

[1] नो पि च सम (ज) कटव बहुक (हि) दोप स (मय) सि देवणप्रिय प्रियद्रशि रय (द) ख्ति । अस्ति पिचु एकतिय समये ससुमते । I R E (Shahbazgarhi), *Aśoka* p 222

actors (*nāṭakā*) numbering even 500, who would give yearly or six-monthly performance before the king at Rājagriha for large rewards. These performances would last for seven days, at which the chief feat shown was that of a damsel walking, dancing, and singing on a horizontal bar. The mischief caused by this *samajjā* was that one of the spectators in the amphitheatre (*mañchātimanchethita*), Uggasena, the son of a rich merchant, fell in love with that performing damsel....

In the *Vinaya*, we read of a *samāja* held on a hill at Rājagriha with dancing, singing and music [ii. 5, 2, 6], and another for a feast [iv. 37, 1]...

....In the *Mahābhārata*, the *samāja* figures as a Śaiva festival [Hopkins, Epic Mythology, pp. 65, 220] accompanied by drinking, song and dance......

Kauṭilya in one passage [II. 25] refers to *utsava, samāja* and *yātrā*, where the drinking of wine was unrestricted for four days, and in another passage [XIII. 5] points out the conqueror's duty of conciliating the conquered people by respecting their national devotion to their country, their religion (*deśa-daivata*), and their institutions, viz. their *utsava, samāja* and *vihāra*."[1]

Samana thus seems to have been a kind of the *samāja*. It is very probable that it may have degenerated into that kind of the latter institution which had for its features the vocation of fine arts like the music and dancing and which cast a few corrupting influences. The mischief referred to in the commentary on *Dhammapada*, mentioned above, may have been almost a common feature of the *Samana*. The kind of *Samāja* forbidden by Aśoka was the continuance of the *Samana* which the morality of the succeeding times discountenanced. *Samāja* itself in still later times degenerated into a very undesirable institution and it is quite in the

[1] Foot-note, pp. 129-30.

fitness of things that those that accompany the courtesans in their professional performances and aid their singing and dancing with musical instruments should have been termed as *Samājis* in the dialect spoken in the eastern U P and Bihar *Samana* may have had also some connection with the merry festivities and musical performances held in the month of Śrāvana in honour of Śiva It is significant that the month of Śrāvana and the musical performances of that month in temple, are called *Sāman* in the Punjab The ancient Ṛgvedic *Samanas* were happy gatherings of young men and women which naturally soon showed signs of moral decay and even during the Ṛgvedic times they must have proved almost hot-beds of immoral associations

Polygamy, polyandry, and levirate

We have already discussed in a previous chapter the customs of polygamy, polyandry and levirate (*niyoga*) These themselves were not considered objectionable in the Indo Aryan society but with the change of ethical and moral standards they came to be viewed as unwanted features of marriage The existence of these, however, does point to a rather questionable standard of morality according to the modern notions

Exposure of illegitimate children

The children born of illicit love were branded illegitimate and were in many cases exposed to die in the open for fear of ostracism as is borne out by *RV*, I 112 8 II 13, 12, 15, 17, IV 19, 9, 30, 16 19, X 61, 8 99, 12

Women soldiers

We have already seen in the chapter on Education that the non Aryan Indians who fought the Aryans had recruited women soldiers in their army It was not considered ungallant and unchivalrous on the part of the Aryan warriors to fight women enemies and kill them on the battle field Indra cast his thunderbolt even upon Dānu, the mother of Vṛtra The

following verse of the *Ṛgveda* refers to Indra fighting Dānu and killing her :—

"Then humbled was the strength of Vṛtra's mother, Indra hath cast his deadly bolt against her.
The mother was above, the son was under, and like a cow beside her calf lay Dānu."[1]

A few cynical and uncharitable remarks against women contained in the *Ṛgveda* have already been referred to above. Nevertheless, they are not so cutting as some of the Christian words that fell from the tongue of the intolerant Tertullian: "You are the devil's gateway···You are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack...On account of you even the son of God had to die."[2] And nowhere in the whole range of the *Ṛgveda* do we come across words such as those uttered by Gregory Thaumaturgus, who says: "A person may find one man chaste among a thousand, but a woman never." The morality of the Ṛgvedic society therefore was of a high type attended, of course, by the necessary evils incidental to a free, merry and chivalrous society.

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[1] नीचावया अभवद्वृत्रपुत्रेन्द्रो अस्या अव वधर्जभार ।
उत्तरा सूरधरः पुत्र आसीद्दानुः शये सहवत्सा न धेनुः ॥ *ṚV.*, I. 32, 9.

[2] J. L. Davies : *A Short History of Women*, ch. IV.

CHAPTER X

SUMMARY[1]

In the foregoing chapters of this work we have surveyed the position of women during the Ṛgvedic age under various headings, viz the Transcendent Woman, the Maiden, Marriage, Marriage—its Features, Customs and Usages, the Wife and Mother, Adornment, Education, Liberty, and Morality We shall now give a short resume of the contents of these chapters in the following pages and then elucidate comparatively the succeeding stages of women's history in the light of those of other nations In the end an attempt will be made to find out the needs and requirements of the modern Indian women and to sketch the possible lines of their social and cultural progress

The Ṛgvedic age saw the zenith of power and influence which the Indo Aryan woman wielded in her household She figured so much in the daily life that the Aryan seers, accustomed to think of a man constantly in company with his wife, could not image their gods as lonely Always do we find the invocations addressed to a god accompanied by his wife, the goddess "The spirit," says an authority of repute, "of the religion in India intuitive brooding, waiting, has much of the essential feminine in it" Much of the freedom, rights and aspirations of the Indian women of later times were lost to them but the very goddesses of the *Ṛgveda* embody the dream of India's future womanhood and reflect its aspirations Aditi is the personified freedom, the eternal mother of all beings, who frees men from all their bondage "Whatever sin we have committed," says the Ṛsi, "may Aditi sever us from" Indrāṇī is the imperious mistress of the household whose oblations make Indra her spouse,

[1] References to the original text in this chapter are not given as they have already been cited in the previous chapters

strong and great. Vāk, the enternal cosmic energy of the universe, is the omniscient, all-pervading counterpart of the Master of the entire creation, and she aids Him in the administration of His unlimited dominion. Sarasvatī is the patron of fine arts and learning. And that lovely Uṣā, the breath and life of all beings yet the pointer to decay and destruction, is the embodiment of womanhood in all its stages of the maiden, wife and mother. The Ṛṣi loves her as he loves his wife adorned with clothes of variegated colours and he feels attracted by her charming person as one by the winning, intriguing beauty of the female dancer. To her are addressed some of the most impassioned hymns containing the best poetry of the *Ṛgveda*. Sūryā is considered even to this day the model for the Hindu bride. The description and imagery of the goddesses were nothing but a reflection of what the seers saw and thought of their own women in their household. It has been said that "Among the early Aryans, the paternal and maternal tie and even the whole family bond was intensely strong. If the father was venerated as the food supplier and protector (*Pitā*) the mother was beloved as the meter out (mater) of daily nourishment, the arranger of the household, measuring and ordering its affairs as the moon (also called *mātā*) measured time. To the Aryan family the father and mother were present gods." (Monier Williams: *Religious Life and Thought in India*). From this picture of the goddesses, the reflected portrait of the Indo-Aryan women, the modern Indian woman can draw her hopes and aspirations and build up a future of real pride and glory.

The daughter, who became a curse to the Hindu family of later times, was affectionately caressed and fondled by her parents and brothers who lavished her with presents at the time of her marriage. She was an untiring worker of the Aryan household plaiting mats, weaving cloth, sewing with unbreakable needles, bringing water in jars,

squeezing juice from the Soma plant for the purposes of worship, thrashing corn, making fire by friction of sticks, milking the cow, preparing curds and clarified butter, and doing other household work of the kind She inherited her father's property in her own right in the absence of a brother, enjoyed the right of maintenance in her father's family until her marriage or until death if she chose to remain unmarried all her life, wrested her dowry from her paternal possessions which thus formed her *strīdhana*, and could give away her ornaments as largesses to Brahmins on the occasion of her marriage She was free to choose her husband

The maiden was given away in marriage to her freely chosen match when approved by the parents, or by the brother in their absence At the time of the nuptial ceremony when the pair took the seven steps together the bridegroom emphatically addressed his bride "Become thou my partner, as thou hast paced all the seven steps with me Apart from thee I cannot live Apart from me do thou not live We shall live together, sharing alike all goods and power combined" 'These words,' says Margaret E Cousins, repeated now to a childwife, are almost blasphemy, a mockery of the implied conditions of the understanding capacity and freedom of circumstance of both husband and wife Mr A Mahadeo Sastri, ex Sate Librarian of Mysore commented on the words of the Rgvedic bridegroom in the following words Woman is to be man's comrade in life his *sakhi*, with the same range of knowledge and interests mature in body, mind and understanding able to enter into a purposeful union on equal terms with a man of equal status, as life partner, of her own free choice both dedicating their life work in service to the divine lord of the Universe, both ready to fulfil the purpose of married life from the very day of marriage onwards"

Marriage to day has in most cases degenerated into a simple sport In the West man and woman commence with the warmth of romance which does not last long and

which ends in many cases as early as they settle down as husband and wife. They are soon exhausted as happy partners of life, for love is a passion and passion has, like a tide, its ebbs and flows. And in the malady which is termed romantic love the paroxysms succeed each other at intervals, always more rapid from the moment the disease declares itself. But by and by the paroxysms are less frequent in proportion as the physical cure approaches, and gradually the feeling cools down. How seriously they rear their imaginary love-edifices only to realize too soon that they hang in the air! Both are disgusted and lie in wait for the earliest opportunity to run to the divorce court. In this respect the Aryan system admits of no comparison. The *Ṛgveda* contains no evidence of divorce obtaining in practice. The very idea was almost abominable. Says Margaret E. Cousins, "Neither must marriage be legalised licence, ruinous to body and soul, wrongly enforced as a duty or a necessity. Such things belong to the reign of the human brute. True marriage is sacred, and divorce is against all occult and spiritual law." The principle of divorce, however, has got to be recognized. There may turn up circumstances in a married life when the dissolution of the marriage alone may be considered the proper course to save a couple from social misery and ultimate destruction and the lead of the European peoples in this regard does deserve a degree of praise. In fact divorce in certain cases was recognized even by the Hindu treatises on the *Saṁskāras*, but cases of its applicability were clearly defined and they arose rarely. To-day in Europe and America there are regular divorce courts to try divorce suits, and every year tens of thousands of such cases are being registered by the legal authorities of the State. The disgrace of this state of affairs is appalling, nay criminal. The boast of a nation, which has divorce courts to its credit or discredit, is simple bragging. It is certainly the very uncivilized state of the brute where the animal in man impelled from sheer sexual

impulse casts his impure looks upon any woman that he accosts The noble mind of the great Roman emperor Augustus revolted against too many divorces in Rome He warned his people against them and advised them to regard marriage more seriously than they did

The romantic marriage has utterly failed in countries where it has been tried It is because pleasure has become the basis of marriage Religion, which once played such an important part in marraige, is now entirely divorced from it Set principles, and fixed ideal of life have been lost sight of, and this is the cause of the immense failure of marriage to day We cannot define our desires, and wherever we can, we hide them, for they are so commonplace, so trifling, so ignoble The search of individual pleasure has caught hold of our minds and we cry halt to the endeavours of those noble minded men who wish to advise us with the wisdom and folly of their experience 'Hands off is our challenge to them who make efforts to guide us The poison of pleasure has infested our ideas and we care more for the time-serving immediate needs of the flesh George Bernard Shaw has aptly remarked in the Preface to one of his great plays that "There is no subject on which more dangerous nonsense is talked and thought than marriage Our social institutions are indeed drifting lower and lower everyday towards a crisis The firm ideal, the fixed standard of conduct for both man and woman that the Aryans, *the blessed pioneers of humanity*, had, are no more our concern The Aryans considered their marriage a very serious affair and they sanctified their nuptial with appropriate religious rites To them it was a life long arrangement where the husband and wife worked together for a common ideal They did not unite for simple romance This was inconceivable The end was something else and marriage was only a means to that end Man alone was nothing as the best *aśrama* was considered to be that of the householder, who united with a better half to

make one single whole of which the later manifestations were Śiva and Pārvatī, Nala and Damayantī, Satyavāna and Sāvitrī, Rāma and Sītā.

In a romantic marriage love ceases, romance finishes when the ephemeral physical charms wither away because there the plinth is too insecure. In old age the wrinkled face of a woman married in the romantic manner has little charm with which to entertain the spent up but greedy husband and so fails utterly whereas in the case of the early Aryan old age gave more impetus to the reciprocal sense of conjugal responsibilities. In the absence of bodily charms conjugal duties alone remained, and they grew all the more important. To the Indo-Aryans temporary sexual arrangements would strike too unreal to endure. In the Aryan marriage both the human and the spiritual elements were properly blended. We must not forget that man, after all, is a bundle of weaknesses, an embodiment of feelings and sentiments. Here the companionate system of marriage fails to satisfy us. To work it properly the entire class of human institutions, social as well as political, will have to be revolutionized and refashioned to the very depth of their foundation. We cannot be too much of utilitarians. We cannot act as unconscious limbs of a machine. The process would be too mechanical, the marital bond too frail. Man cannot live alone. He is a dependent being and he must have somebody to care and feel for him particularly in his old age. The Ṛgvedic Aryan considered marriage a sanctity. To him every incident of marriage had considerable significance. He felt a kind of responsibility implied in his very being. His existence was a sort of heredity which, he conceived, he must pass on to the undying line of his posterity. This notion has been emphasised by a few modern social thinkers as well and we may read in the following sentences of Gasquoine Hartley a beautiful summary of the ideal of marriage. Says she, "We need a new consciousness of our social spirit and racial res-

ponsibilities in marriage, the ideal of handing down at least as much as we have received We are the guardians of the life force Let us honour ideals of self dedication, of fixed obligations of the one sex to the other, of duties of our children long before they are born, and let us spread the new Romance of love's Responsibility to life, then there will be in society in general and not in a mere fraction of it, happiness in marriage and passionate parenthood '

Polygamy during the Rgvedic age was only a privilege of the few—the kings, nobles and their priests Polyandry was not obtaining in the society although a few references to it in the *Rgveda* would show that there did linger a few cases here and there and that the poet could yet think of it and allude to it A few cases of levirate are also on record which prove the existence of the custom of *Niyoga* meant to ease the condition of the society It was mostly because of this that the widows were absorbed properly in the community and their lot was amply bettered Monogamous marriages were the general rule and the common people, the *viśas*, wedded a single wife Polygamy must have been a legacy from a time of military conditions when most of the additional wives were spoils of war and enslaved aborigines Vedic culture never countenanced a society where multiplicity of wives became a fashion, as, for instance among the Arabs or the Jews Syed Ameer Ali observes, In the days of ignorance, as the followers of Mohammed speak of the time before the birth of the prophet the chief feature with regard to woman in Arabia and near districts was the unrestricted polygamy Among the Arabs woman was a chattel the integral part of the state of her husband or father, yet this polygamy was not what is understood in modern days by the term but rather the patriarchal system of the Israelities In Persia there was no recognized law of marriage and in some of the neighbouring countries the custom of plurality of wives assumed some of its most frightful aspects" (*Life and*

Teachings of Mohammed). Among the Jews also polygamy was a prevalent practice and there seems to have been no limit to the number of wives and concubines allowed except the ability to maintain them and their children. Jad Hachasakab said, " A man may marry many wives, even a hundred, either at once or one after another, and his wife cannot prevent it provided that he is able to give to each suitable food, clothing and marriage duty." This state of things could not prevail in the Indo-Aryan community. There the status of the wife was very high. As a bride she was given to the bridegroom to be the mistress of his household, to look after the slaves and the cattle with kindness, and to lord over her parents-in-law, brothers-in-law and the sisters-in-law. She was identified with the very home. She kept the family fire always kindled, and she ever appeared as a partner of her husband in the sacrifices and other forms of worship. This could be properly realized only if monogamy was the general practice. Incest, whether parental or of the brother and sister, had become a defunct custom during the Ṛgvedic age. Marriage was performed in many forms which shows that the eight forms of the later times were now beginning to take shape. Thus the Brāhma, Prājāpatya, Gāndharva and Āsura forms had already become a sight.

The Ṛgvedic woman was at her greatest in her motherhood. Her strength lay in her children. She was not considered a chattel. Slave girls also on several occasions became wives of influential Aryans and could be given and received freely. At times they became mothers of influential personages of the *Ṛgveda*. The mother or wife, however, does not seem to have inherited landed property in her own right. She was yet the mistress of her entire household and the omission did not very much offend her. She was brave, noble and virtuous. It has been said of the Spartans that they "wanted strong men: the mothers therefore must be strong. The Spartans wanted brave men: mothers therefore

must be brave The Spartans wanted resolute men, men with decision of character the mothers must be resolute" This was true with the Aryan mothers as well "But in Sparta unlike in India, the softer sentiments associated with mother hood in our eyes were also destroyed by a rigorous discipline, which required each new born babe to be brought before a committee of hygiene in order to be judged strong enough to live, or weak and therefore fit only for death by exposure This was absolutely inconceivable in the Rgvedic community There the desire for the son was earnest both as a military as well as a religious need and the daughter was considered the very breath and life of the family Widows were generally remarried soon after the death of their husbands, and the custom of sati had died out as the existence of the widows would show Inter marriages between the Brahmins and the Rājanyas as well as between the Aryans and the non Aryans were frequent and common The Indian woman was never greedy of wealth or power She did not marry her own brother like the Egyptian Nefartari, the daughter of Aah Hetep I so that the wealth might be perpetuated in the family

The Rgvedic woman dressed in woollen and also perhaps in cotton clothes dyed in various colours There were about four pieces—the upper and the lower garments the occasional head dress and the all covering shawl The common ornaments that she wore were the necklace the ear rings the armlets the wristlets the anklets and the like But the use of the nose ring is conspicuous by its absence Women wore long hair, oiled and combed it and knit it in long broad plaits They applied unguent to the eyes perfumed their person and used several other items of toilet The several items of their furniture included their boxes and bed steads A particular kind of high bed is associated with them

The Indo Aryans gave their women enough liberty of movement There was no seclusion of women and conse

quently no purdah and they went unveiled to festive gatherings. A noted fair was the *Samana* where maidens flocked to make merry and find a husband. They even spent their nights there. They had the right of self-expression and could freely talk of their own marriage. There was rarely any restriction on their free choice of a husband. The discipline of the Athenian women during the post-Homeric days was to be shut up in the house to breed. This was not true of the Ṛgvedic women although their services as potential, hero-bearing mothers were equally important. The Indo-Aryan woman was never secluded and she would have simply laughed at the words—"A free woman should be bounded by the street"—of a character in one of Menander's plays; and the idea embodied in Thucydides' expression—"That woman is best who is least spoken of among men, whether for good or for evil"—would have sounded ridiculous to her. One of the most important amusements of women was swinging accompanied by songs.

The Indo-Aryans well recognized the truth embodied in the dictum—Ignorance is weakness, knowledge power—and so they prepared their women for power. They taught them music and dancing, the religious lore and the military science. They had among them great women ṛṣis like Ghoṣā, Apālā, Lopāmudrā, Viśvavārā, Sūryā, Vasukara's wife, mother of the Gaupāyanas, Indrāṇī, Sarparājñī, Mamatā, Yamī and many others. Viśpalā, the warrior wife of King Khela, and Mudgalānī were experts in the art of fighting.

Too much freedom and a high degree of morality do not go hand in hand. Women during the Ṛgvedic age enjoyed much liberty as a result of which there were bound to appear bad characters in both sexes. There was much of love-making among the younger people and the *Samanas* were hot-beds of such affairs. Appointments were made and kept. Girls visited trysts and rendezvous where they met their lovers. They even invited them at times in their own

chambers at midnight where the lovers stayed until dawn There was no dearth of illegitimate children who were even deserted and exposed to die for fear of social ostracism But this very fact shows that the society was severe on these evil doers Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that there was much of love making among the people, the Rgvedic society set up a high order of morality and there were hardly any instances of adultery among married women Non-Aryan women joined the army in large numbers and the Aryans did not consider it bad morality to attack and kill these amazons

It has been rightly pointed out by Langdon-Davies that there was no woman question at Athens because all women were as mere vegetables, and there was no woman question at Sparta because both men and women there were little better than animals Moreover Sparta, the eugenic paradise and the first and only practitioner of the equality of the sexes, has left literally nothing to posterity but a record of implacable attachment to life, like that of a dog which has its teeth fixed immovably in the neck of an enemy ten times its size It was not so in India The social adjustment of the sexes was so perfect that we find no complaint on the part of the woman against the authority of the man At least never did an Aryan woman cry out in distress in the manner of Medea, who said, 'Of all things that have life and sense we women are most wretched, for we are compelled to buy with gold a husband who is also worst of all the master of our person And on his character, good or bad, our whole fate depends" It has been rightly held that the Greek civilization never succeeded in giving redress to the eternal complaint and that married life and its duties were never the highest Hellenic ideal Athens, it is aptly pointed out for all its intellectual grandeur died out, Sparta for all its eugenics became hopelessly degenerate, all that was good and valuable as human experience passed by way of Greek literature to later times and younger civilizations

Almost all the ancient civilizations have been effaced from the world, India alone has endured the ravages of time and remains alive to this day. She is still living, however weakly, in her continuity and she alone solved her woman problem in the past.

But time is a great factor in the rise and fall, progress and decay of nations. There is some such thing as good and bad time which may of course be so characterized as a result of events, auspicious or ugly. At the close of the Ṛgvedic period there set in bad times in the history of social India and restrictions were gradually imposed on the freedom of women. Men took upon themselves to think and plan for their women, who henceforth sank into a secondary position where they began to play a second fiddle to their men. The idea of purity of blood caught hold of the Aryan mind and it generally dominated all their activities. Purity of blood as an ethnic principle is a fiction and the admixture of races has been a vigorous common truth. The Gauls and the Huns mixed their blood freely with the high-bred Roman ladies on the banks of the Tiber and the Teutons in innumerable cases lost themselves in the non-Teutonic races. The non-Aryan hordes that raided the rich plains of India were lost in the Āryan social fabric. The later Śakas, Ābhīras, Hūnas and others likewise were enveloped in the Aryan folds and absorbed in the Indian social matrix. And yet the law givers of India in the post Ṛgvedic period strove and struggled to devise means to keep their blood pure and thus ran after an unrealizable mirage! They prescribed rules for early marriages and banned freedom of women in deed, speech and even thought. They enjoined upon them to identify themselves wholly with their husbands and reduce themselves to nothing in action as well as desires. The *Gṛhyasūtras*, the *Smṛtis* and such other treatises, all sang the same note and completed the ruin of women. Women themselves bowed to these restrictions and accepted them as their only lot. We never read of revolts or murmurs on their part against the grinding

misery which the codes enjoined upon them It is indeed an instance of unprecedented bravery on their part that when they were called upon to identify their life with their husbands' they did so willingly, nay, they even identified their death with theirs The practice of sati of the primitive times was soon revived and a procession of unfortunate widows, following the bier of a deceased royal husband to immolate themselves on the funeral pyre of the dead became a common sight The woman lost her tongue and was struck dumb, the man, the officiating priest spoke for her the butcher spoke for the cow!

The Aryan social system degenerated and it enunciated the suicidal policy of child marriage and seclusion of women Child marriage produced widows and seclusion fear of men on the part of women This fear, says Cousins in her inimitable style is a miasma It is the nadir of degradation in social affairs and remains to this day a slur and a stigma on both sexes The great Rgvedic personages like Indrani Mudgalani and Vāk were forgotten and in their place there stepped in the seemingly high statured women of the epics reflected in the shadow of their glorious husbands And then these same were followed by an unbroken crop of pigmy women who could not rear themselves up could not even lean on the arms of their husbands but had to be carried But now this crop is also nearing its reaping time There is audible the sound of a vigorous reshuffling under the surface of the Indian society and the 'stirrings of a new life are discernible The lame has found legs to tread on and the dumb a tongue to express himself There is a surge of desire for emancipation and an urge for pushing ahead A mighty wave of freedom has captured the hearts of women all over Asia Our women have risen in the wake of the West They have adorned the presidential chairs of legislative bodies and of social conferences and political Congresses The history of the constitutional world has for the first time been furnished

with an example of women directing the affairs of legislatures in the Council Chambers of Madras and the United Provinces. And they have shown that they can equal men in these spheres. Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit has achieved the unique distinction of filling the office of a provincial minister. The successful discharge of the duties attaching to her portfolio has amply justified our trust in her. The excellence of her work has eminently proved her merit and she can to-day easily rank with the best of our men. Tursum Baya and Sarojini Naidu sweep away everything before them. Everywhere our women are shaking off their shackles. Education has generated the promptings of a new life, a desire to work and a sense of sacrifice. But it is here that we need a word of caution.

Caution in our progress has been necessitated because of a very potent reason. We are feeling the influence of the West in our education, in our manner of living and even thinking, as a matter of fact, in everything. In the province of education it is most felt. We are getting both sips of ambrosia as well as dozes of poison. The western method of education has made its point felt in every branch of teaching and learning. It is instilling its own culture through the means of its method, and our women, the newly educated maidens, are imbibing most of its influence, both beneficial and baneful. The former trait, of which the main incidents are a new outlook on life, an open vision, a revolting urge for emancipation and liberty, a sense of equality and justice, a spirit against superstitions, a surge of nationalism, and the like, is to be hailed as auspicious and benevolent. But the latter, with its incidents of artificiality, individual aloofness and personal considerations, egotism, love of the unreal and the superficial, of ultra-modernism and of unrestrained license, is to be discarded as malevolent. In fact, whatever we are importing in our culture we have to weigh and value properly. We cannot stop altogether the influence of the west and it will not be even desirable to do so; firstly,

because while doing so we shall be losing some of the noblest and finest of modern ideas, the critical method and the scientific outlook, which are essentially western, and, secondly, because we shall be an isolated unit in the crowd of nations We cannot go back to the Vedas, and we cannot at the same time afford to remain isolated in this progressing world To be isolated to day is to court death Our interest lies in the preservation of our best traditions and in welcoming such healthy influences of the West as would prove congenial to our growth In the field of education our women have made considerable *outward* progress This progress is mainly in the nature of a revolt Revolt is not essentially good or essentially bad in itself Its merit or demerit has to be judged in the light of the cause to which it is applied The revolt of the pupil against the beneficent instructions of the teacher, or of the son against the wholesome admonitions of the father is absolutely of the wrong and objectionable type, whereas that against the iniquitous, unjust and slavish injunctions of the society is exceedingly commendable Our girls, like our boys, are out for a change and they revolt against everything They are developing within them a strange sense of values and resent advice or guidance A peculiar trend of pompous display seems to capture their minds and our modern institutions of education are breeding in them a feeling of irresponsible ego They aspire to be come the colourful butterfly chased by a number of lost heads This has got to go Tender feelings are indeed some of the most valued possessions of humanity but the failing weakness or the helpless imbecility can never be ad judged as lasting qualities whether in men or in women Physical charms and attractions are becoming the daily concern of our young women slimness in body they seem to view now as their strength and pride and roundness of features as their weakness and despair They seem to consider that their strength lies in their weakness and that they should seem to wither with the touch But this is not desired of our

girls. They are expected instead to imbibe the real feminine virtues and grow into the heroic women of yore. They have to grow within them that impressive, proud and distinctive individuality which will make its impress felt on men and quieten their restlessness. This individuality will be well-fused in that of the man's, nevertheless, it will remain distinct from his. She will not let him peep too much into her and will endeavour to keep in fact the enigmatic character of her sex so that man may not grow out of her, so that he may not get fed up and fatigued, and may not sicken and die for want of that care and affection which sustain and strengthen him without disclosing to him the full capacity of the undrying source of the fountian and the ever moistening and tendering Hippocrene.

It is not proposed to lead here a crusade against the use of the aids to beauty. Our women may have, if they so desire, all the heaps of wonderful things that are found arranged in a toilet shop—scent-bottles, powders, pots of perfume, odoriferous pastilles, phials, washes and all those accessories which are requisite ere beauty can be made perfect. What is urged to be avoided is the change of our women, the very pictures of health and freshness, into slim ladies of the hard sexless stamp of the *cultured* female. What is wanted of them is that they should develop vigorous womanhood endowed with the winning charms of nature. Such women can never be appendages to their husbands and will defend themselves, when needed, against a hundred odds. That type of education must be evolved which, besides giving the woman a knowledge of the languages and literatures and of the sciences, further endows her with a character. She has got to be resolute, brave and intrepid. She must be prepared to 'ride in the whirl wind and direct the storm', and, if need be, to dare and die. The type of education that is being imparted to her is undoubtedly faulty and lacking in many things. In several cases it creates in

the modern girl an aptitude to become unnecessarily conspicuous. Gandhi was perfectly right when he characterized the modern girl as playing a Juliet to half a dozen Romeos. Co-education also is to some extent the cause of developing such a frame of mind. But co-education cannot be relinquished as there are more virtues than vices in it. We have neither the funds nor the will to stop it. It will undoubtedly engender a degree laxity in the morals of our boys and girls but we have got to brave it all. And we shall have even to revise to some extent our definition of chastity and to broaden its narrowness. In fact, the definition of chastity has had to undergo several changes even in the past. There was a time, for example, when the very touch or even the shadow of another man was considered enough to defile the purity of a married woman. Such chastity can hardly be an object of pride with the people of to-day. A certain degree of laxity in the morals is incidental to every society where free mixing of men and women and co-education are in vogue. It was so in the Ṛgvedic society also. Thus we shall have to choose the lesser evil and earnestly strive for making co-education a success. Here is provided an opportunity for the young men and women to make an acquaintance with each other which raises the curtain for a while on both sides and lessens their enigmatic character, which otherwise proves an unsatisfied curiosity. And an insatiated curiosity, when accentuated, breeds many an evil and that at a time when it is impossible to hold back the curious, whether man or woman.

Women have suffered in India, as in the western countries also until very recently, in many ways. But the most arresting feature of this suffering has been the neglect of her right of inheritance in the paternal property. She has been considered an appendage of man. This continues to be even now her lot and it indeed reflects on the sense of honesty of our men. In the common Indian family there is a tremendous difference in the degrees of care taken

of the boy and of the girl. The girl is a poor, neglected creature while the boy is 'the master of all he surveys.' The educated sensible families are doing much for ameliorating her condition but ordinarily her fate is woeful. Such is also the case of married women. It is possible that spread of education and sense of equity and honesty on the part of men and the call for justice on that of women will do a little good, nevertheless, it will not carry them far and we shall have to take the aid of legislature in this direction. The lines in this respect will have to be followed mostly as suggested by Dr. A. S. Altekar in his recent invaluable work entitled the *Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation*. Legal rights making them lawful owners of immovable property will have to be conferred on women. By now what they have had is the right of maintenance in the paternal family until they are married and restricted ownership in the husband's landed property. Their right in their father's property will have to be recognized.

But the nature of the woman's right in her ancestral property requires a careful discussion. It is generally held by some of the enthusiasts working in the cause of women that daughters should have equal right with the brothers in the ancestral property. This is not to be as it will prove inequitous and unjust with regard to the sons in the family. The daughter in the long run does not normally belong to the family as she enters another after her marriage. If the rights of the wife in the movable and immovable property of her husband are properly recognized by the law of the land the hardship in case of the daughter in her father's family will become greatly mitigated and the seeming wrongs mostly redressed. And since, according to this scheme, she inherits property in her own right in her husband's family she will thus be placed on a more advantageous footing than her brothers, who will receive their apportioned shares only in the father's family. Thus while she inherits

in two families her brothers inherit in only one This will indeed be unjust Therefore here we must act on a saner principle The daughter should be given as much care in her father's family as her brother gets, and the same amount of money should be spent on her as on her brother, of course according to the exigencies of the nature of her education She should get her maintenance until she marries But if she chooses to remain unmarried all her life she may get either an allowance or a share in the ancestral property equal to that of the brother Special consideration to some extent for the son of the family will have to be made as he is expected to marry and have children The daughter, as usual, will receive a dowry at the time of marriage proportionate to the means of her father s property There remains yet another point to be discussed in this regard The maternal grand father's property is inherited by the daughter's son and not by the daughter's daughter in the former's presence This must change Here, since property is devolving on them from a different outside source, an equal share should be given to each There is no chance of any further advan tage to either over the other as both have their right of inheritance, besides this elsewhere i e the son in his father's family and the daughter in her husband s family when she marries There may be some religious difficulty as the in heritance of the maternal grandfather s property by the daughter's son is not meant only as a means of devolu tion of property but also seeks to find a s n to the grand father who would offer oblations to him after his death and to his manes This latter function the daughter s daughter cannot perform But this will have to be brushed aside, for, after all, there is no remedy when a father dies with out leaving a son and when the family becomes extinct In case of the family becoming extinct the only idea that remains is one of the devolution of property And property can never remain unowned Therefore in the present case also the family of the maternal grandfather may be taken

to have become extinct and the daughter's daughter be given an equal share with the daughter's son.

The franchise having been widened, our women have entered the field of active public life and have come to shoulder the responsibilities of administration. With the working of the adult suffrage they are expected to gain further ground. Still there remain several disabilities which debar them from taking to public service and to government offices. These bars, it is time, were lifted. This can be effected by statute law.

Child marriages must now be stopped with a strong hand. The Sarda Act should have gone a long way in this regard but it has not gained much ground due to the apathy of the people and due to the fact that the child marriage being a non-cognizable offence the police cannot take steps in the matter. And the Act has become utterly ineffective. Hundreds of such marriages, it is supposed, are contracted in the land despite the existence and operation of this Act. The Act can become effective only when the Government makes child marriage a cognizable offence. In like manner polygamy will have to be altogether suppressed by law. It should be allowed only in certain very clear cases where the living wife has been declared medically unfit for the act of procreation or has absolutely become disabled by disease. Divorce also has got to be introduced but the application of law pertaining to it will have to be very stringently and carefully made otherwise we shall be constrained to run the nefarious divorce courts the existence of which they deplore in America. Divorce is verily an evil, although a necessary one.

We must remember, as it has been already pointed out, that the West has entered our soul and that it has come to stay with us in our life, in our thought, and in our institutions. But the wave is strong; it may drown us. We

must rise and stem its tide Yet we cannot afford to neglect it for it has proved in several points very fruitful to us We must then cut small channels to receive the amount of water we require We can not possibly stop the wave It is bound to come What is desirable is to become wiser by the wisdom and folly of the West. We have to see that we do not repeat those blunders which the West has committed and which it declares as such Only the achievements of the West should be ours

Respect for women is a necessary trait of a rising nation We are learning it no doubt, but we are learning it slowly We must realize that the mother is the generator of man and she deserves to be greatly honoured. It has been aptly held that unless our nation 'learns to respect and treat properly the mothers of the future, all talk about motherland is cant and self illusion ' The future lies in the hand of our women, our mothers, but we must not hinder their progress and act as impediments in their way by our short sighted perverseness They must be given all the freedom they need. As a matter of fact, we have no right to keep them in fetters We have been their goalers by now we must now throw away the keys, shatter the irons on their feet and demolish the prison, and then alone can we hope to rise Our women are our hope

It will not be out of place to quote here the noble exhortation of *that great worker in the cause of India and her* women, Margaret E Cousins "Ignorance makes slaves ;" says she, 'Slave mothers produce craven children The ignorance and enslaved conditions of later Roman motherhood brought about the fall of the great Roman Empire There is a western saying, 'Educate that you may be free'. Foremost, then, among the race regenerators and nation builders will be those large minded persons who work for the education of women ..... ." "Let neither sex arrogate to itself that divine right of restriction," she continues, "but let freedom and equal

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opportunity, mutual encouragement, respect and recognition form the foundations of a new era of comradeship of men and women in the land sacred with the memory of heroes and heroines. Then only will India realise the value of the gifts her women can bring to her altar, and the impoverishment of national life that is now taking place owing to the false conditions under which they have to live—conditions so bad that instinctively no man wants to be reborn a woman; and woman herself deprecates or is ignorant of her own value acquiesces *in wrong ideas of herself as* 'temptress,' 'unclean' and 'secondary,' instead of realising the honour and responsibility that are given to her by the Creator." (*The Revolt of Asian Womanhood*)

Let the Indian woman rise and declare to the mankind in the words of Chitrā, the great creation of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore:

"I am Chitra. No goddess to be worshipped nor yet the object of common pity to be brushed aside like a moth with indifference. If you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring, if you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self."

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ERRATA

Read	considered	for	considred	on p. 43, line 31.
,,	of riotous	,,	ofriotous	,, p. 45, ,, 22.
,,	but	,,	dut	,, p. 75, ,, 10.
,,	Hair-coiffure	,,	Hair-cuiffure	,, p. 168, sub-heading.
,,	heels	,,	heals	,, p. 182, line 22.
,,	their	,,	there	,, p. 188, ,, 15.
,,	was	,,	were	,, p. 207, ,, 23.
,,	them	,,	then	,, p. 218, ,, 29.

Change the verse printed under footnote No. 4 on p. 150 into the following :—

स्त्रियो हि दास आयुधानि चक्रे कि मा करन्नबला अस्य सेनाः। ibid., V. 30, 9.